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THE  
U S E  
OF  
SACRED HISTORY;

ESPECIALLY AS ILLUSTRATING AND CONFIRMING THE  
GREAT DOCTRINES OF REVELATION.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED  
TWO DISSERTATIONS;

THE FIRST, ON THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE HISTORY CONTAINED IN THE PENTATEUCH, AND IN THE BOOK OF JOSHUA;—THE SECOND, PROVING THAT THE BOOKS ASCRIBED TO MOSES WERE ACTUALLY WRITTEN BY HIM, AND THAT HE WROTE THEM BY DIVINE INSPIRATION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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- Page 50. line 7. and 22. *for future read subsequent*  
—— 80.——17. *for respects read respect*  
—— 100.——4. *from bottom, dele, in his Timæus,*

### VOL. II.

- Page 256. line 11. *for better read bitter*  
—— 273.——14. *for road read rod*  
—— 284.——1. *for justice read judgment*

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THE  
U S E  
OF  
SACRED HISTORY.

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PART III.

ON THE  
USE OF SACRED HISTORY,

AS ILLUSTRATING AND CONFIRMING THE GREAT  
DOCTRINES OF REVELATION.

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**H**AVING taken a cursory view of the History of God's ancient people, as containing many useful lessons; we may now turn our attention to Scripture-History in general, as *confirming* or *illustrating* the *doctrines* of revelation. And so abundant is the evidence, which God is pleased to give us of the truth of these, that scarcely one of them wants this attestation.—It is only a few of the more important doctrines that we can propose to illustrate in this manner.

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 SECTION I.

*On the Being and Unity of God.—His Being must be matter of Faith.—His Unity demonstrated, from Creation ;—from his wonderful Works, for the deliverance of his People ;—from the Judgments executed on the gods of the Heathen ;—from the Accomplishment of Prophecy ;—from the Answer of Prayer ;—from his Faithfulness to his Church ;—from the whole work of Redemption ;—from his Operation on the Heart.*

“ THE Sacred History,” as one justly observes, “ is the history of God himself.” It is designed as a permanent testimony to his *being*. This is made known by the light of nature. But it is the will of God, that we should be persuaded of this doctrine, fundamental to all religion, not merely by reason, but by faith ; and that our faith, with respect to this doctrine, should have the same foundation that it has with respect to any other contained in his word. Therefore, it is also given as matter of revelation. Nor, in the volume of inspiration, is it merely taught as a doctrine. It is demonstrated as a fact. We learn it not from God’s word only, but also from his works. How often, in this respect, does he appeal to the  
works

works of creation? "The heavens declare the  
 "glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his  
 "handiwork <sup>a</sup>." "Ask now the beasts, and they  
 "shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and  
 "they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and  
 "it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea  
 "shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in  
 "all these, that the hand of the LORD hath wrought  
 "this? In whose hand is the soul of every living  
 "thing, and the breath of all mankind <sup>b</sup>." In  
 the account given of the creation, we have an ex-  
 hibition of the Creator himself; "God created."  
 In the very first words of the sacred volume, the  
 existence of God is contrasted with that of all  
 other beings. He "created in the beginning <sup>c</sup>,"  
 that is, "the beginning of the creature" or crea-  
 tion <sup>d</sup>. This declares that he existed before all  
 things, and that he gave being, not only to all  
 the creatures, but to time itself.

A similar appeal is frequently made to the works  
 of providence. "The LORD is known by the  
 "judgment which he executeth <sup>e</sup>." It is thus  
 that he replies to those fools who say in their  
 hearts, "No God;" who, if they do not disbe-  
 lieve the doctrine of his existence, wish that it  
 were not true, and act as if assured that it were  
 false, especially in persecuting his Church. God  
 "scattereth the bones of him that encampeth  
 "against" her. He enables her to "put them  
 "to shame, because God hath despised them <sup>f</sup>."

A 2

When

<sup>a</sup> Psal. xix. 1.

<sup>b</sup> Job xii. 7.—10.

<sup>c</sup> Gen. i. 1.

<sup>d</sup> Mark xiii. 19.

<sup>e</sup> Psal. ix. 16.

<sup>f</sup> Psal. liii. 1. 5.

When he executes upon them the judgments written in his book, men are made to say ; “ Verily there is a reward<sup>a</sup> for the righteous, verily “ he is a God that judgeth in the earth <sup>g</sup>.” They find it necessary to acknowledge, not only that “ he is,” but that he is the “ rewarder of all them “ that diligently seek him <sup>h</sup>.” Of this, the history of the church is one continued proof ; as appears from the beautiful compend given of it in the chapter of which these words are a part. All that they did or suffered was “ by faith ;” and their success clearly shows, that their faith was not placed on a nonentity.

Next to the doctrine of the existence of God, none claims a more distinguished place than that of his *unity*. To deny the unity of the Supreme Being, is in effect to deny his existence : and this may be one reason why the heathen are called “ atheists in the world <sup>i</sup>.” Hence there is no doctrine, that God hath been at more pains to inculcate and confirm. He separated one nation from all the rest of the world, as a peculiar people, for the preservation of this important truth. He employed them in exhibiting it to others, and by means of them he confirmed it in the sight of the heathen. “ Ye are my witnesses, saith JEHOVAH, “ and my servant whom I have chosen, that ye “ may know and believe me, and understand that “ I am he : before me there was no God formed, “ neither shall there be after me <sup>k</sup>.”

The

<sup>g</sup> Psal. lviii. 11.

<sup>h</sup> Heb. xi. 6.

<sup>i</sup> Eph. ii. 12.

<sup>k</sup> Isa. xliii. 10.



The Sacred History uniformly attests that there is but one God, and that this is JEHOVAH the God of Israel. The proof that JEHOVAH is God, and that this God is one, is indeed the same. In many passages of Scripture, these two are inseparably conjoined. But even where the unity of God is not expressly declared, the revelation of himself as JEHOVAH implies the doctrine of his absolute unity. This name itself excludes every idea of an equal. He will not give the glory of it to another: for it denotes his independence and self-existence, and therefore the unity of his essence. Hence, all those operations by which he manifests that he is JEHOVAH, equally declare him to be the One God.

The law, given to God's peculiar people, is a key to their history, and their history is a practical commentary on their law, and a continued proof of its divine origin. As several of the precepts of the moral law, and many of the positive injunctions, teach or guard the doctrine of the unity; when God would commit this law to the church, he infolds it in an historical narrative, which throws the greatest light on this fundamental doctrine.

1. He would not have the sons of Jacob to consider him merely as their Father, who had "made them, and established" them, as a people: for, like other nations, they might have believed this, however inconsistently, without acknowledging that he was the one true God. He therefore re-

veals himself as “JEHOVAH, the *creator* of the “ends of the earth ;” and addresses his peculiar people in this language: “Thus saith JEHOVAH *thy redeemer*, and he that formed thee “from the womb, I am JEHOVAH that *maketh all “things*, and stretcheth forth the heavens alone, “that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself<sup>m</sup>.” He accordingly prefaces the volume of revelation with a particular account of the work of creation, which none but himself could give: and from this account, as well as from a great many other passages, it is most evident that this was wholly the work of One Being. The idolatry of the Gentiles consisted in worshipping the creatures instead of God. To prevent the imitation of this idolatry, and to illustrate its absurdity, he enumerates the various parts of creation, and shews that they were all the works of his hands. The most of the heathen nations worshipped the host of heaven, either expressly, or under the disguise of different proper names or peculiar symbols. But, in the history of creation, the church is taught that the sun, moon, and stars were all the workmanship of her God. For he who “created the “heaven and the earth<sup>n</sup>,” “finished all the host “of them<sup>o</sup>.” On this subject, Bossuet has an observation, which merits our attention. “It pleased the great Artificer,” he says, “to create the “light, even before he reduced it to the form he “gave it in the sun and stars: because he meant “to teach us, that those great and glorious luminaries,

1 Isa. xl. 28.

m Isa. xlv. 24.

n Gen. i. 1.

o Gen. ii. 2.



"naries, of which some have thought fit to make  
 "deities, had, in themselves, neither that precious  
 "and shining matter, whereof they were compo-  
 "sed, nor the admirable form to which we see  
 "them reduced <sup>p</sup>."

It was held in a great part of the East, that  
 there were two first principles; the one, the cause  
 of good; the other, of evil; the one presiding  
 over light, and the other over darkness. But the  
 sacred historian declares that light and darkness  
 are equally under the power of the God of Is-  
 rael <sup>q</sup>. The language of God in his prophetic  
 address to Cyrus, contains a beautiful illustration  
 of this history. Its force and beauty especially  
 appear, when we reflect that Cyrus was the leader  
 of that very people who zealously adhered to the  
 doctrine of two first principles, and with whom  
 it seems to have originated. "I am JEHOVAH,  
 "and there is none else, there is no God besides  
 "me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known  
 "me: that they may know from the rising of the  
 "sun, and from the west, that there is none be-  
 "sides me, I am JEHOVAH, and there is none else.  
 "I form the *light* and create *darkness*: I make  
 "*peace* and create *evil*: I JEHOVAH do all these  
 "things <sup>r</sup>."

The heathen nations "changed the glory of the  
 "uncorruptible God, into an image made like to  
 "corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed  
 "beasts, and creeping things <sup>s</sup>." The worship of

A 4

the

<sup>p</sup> Universal Hist. Vol. i. Part 2.

<sup>q</sup> Gen. i. 3.—5.

<sup>r</sup> Isa. xlv. 5.—7.

<sup>s</sup> Rom. i. 23.

the Egyptians was uncommonly vile. They worshipped the ox, the lion, the dog, the cat, the goat, the ape, the crocodile, the ichneumon, &c. The Israelites, who had sojourned so long among this idolatrous race, were deeply tainted with their pollutions. To pour contempt on this debasing worship, God carries his people back to the beginning of all things ; and shews them the fowl generated from the waters, and the quadruped and reptile rising from the earth, at his command. If the body of man himself was formed from the dust<sup>s</sup>, it must be a very unfit image of its Former : as it afterwards appears, from the denunciation of the sentence of death, that nothing could be more absurd than to deify and adore a dead man. Well, therefore, may we say with Hezekiah ; “ O JEHOVAH of hosts,—thou art the “ God, even thou alone of all the kingdoms of “ the earth ; thou hast made heaven and earth<sup>t</sup>.”

11. He records the *wonderful works* which he performed, and the *temporal deliverances* which he gave to his Church, as proofs of his being the only true God. She, on this ground, acknowledges his unity : “ Thou art great, and dost wonderful things : thou art God alone<sup>u</sup>.” He appeals to the redemption which he should give his people from Egypt, in proof of his claim to the character of JEHOVAH, and of his peculiar relation to them ; “ I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm, and with great judgment. And I “ will

<sup>s</sup> Gen. ii. 7.

<sup>t</sup> Isa. xxxvii. 16.

<sup>u</sup> Psal. lxxxvi. 10.

“ will take you to me for a people, and I will be  
 “ to you a God : and ye shall know that I am JE-  
 “ HOVAH your God, which bringeth you out from  
 “ under the burdens of the Egyptians<sup>v</sup>.” It was his  
 will that his unity should appear from these works.  
 Therefore he thus addresses Israel: “ Hath God af-  
 “ fayed to take him a nation from the midst of ano-  
 “ ther nation, by temptations, by signs and by won-  
 “ ders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a  
 “ stretched-out arm, and by great terrors, accord-  
 “ ing to all that JEHOVAH your God did for you  
 “ in Egypt before your eyes? Unto thee it was  
 “ shewed, that thou mightest know that JEHO-  
 “ VAH he is God ; there is *none else besides him*.”  
 By the record of these illustrious facts, he would  
 have his people perpetually reminded of this fun-  
 damental doctrine, and confirmed in the belief  
 of it. For he adds : “ Know therefore this day,  
 “ and consider it in thine heart, that JEHOVAH he  
 “ is God in heaven above, and upon the earth be-  
 “ neath : *there is none else*<sup>w</sup>.”

I. With this view were those works recorded,  
 which immediately displayed the *mercy* of God  
 towards his people. For they were recorded for  
 the use of the church in all ages, with the very  
 same design with which they were at first per-  
 formed. Were the Israelites miraculously prefer-  
 ved in the desert? It was to prove, that their  
 God alone was worthy of faith and adoration : “ I  
 “ have led you forty years in the wilderness : your  
 “ clothes

<sup>v</sup> Exod vi. 6, 7.

<sup>w</sup> Deut. iv. 34, 35 39.

“ clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy  
 “ shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot. Ye have  
 “ not eaten bread, neither have you drunk wine,  
 “ or strong drink: that ye might know that I am  
 “ JEHOVAH your God <sup>x</sup>.” Did the waters of Jordan divide before them, as soon as the feet of the priests rested in them? It was that they might know, that “ the living God was among them;” and that the ark which passed over before them, was “ the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all  
 “ the earth.”

2. His works of *judgment* have the same end. When he confounds his enemies, and troubles them for ever; when he puts them to shame, and makes them to perish; it is that “ men may know, “ that he whose name alone is JEHOVAH, is the “ most high over all the earth.” It is his pleasure, that even his incorrigible adversaries may have such ample evidence of this, that they shall either acknowledge it, or be left without excuse. He therefore says to Pharaoh; “ I will send all “ my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people: that thou mayest “ know that there is none like me in all the “ earth.” Is Nebuchadnezzar driven from his dignity? Hath he a beast’s heart given unto him? It is “ to the intent that the living may know “ that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of “ men <sup>b</sup>.”

### 3. From

<sup>x</sup> Deut. xxix. 5, 6.

<sup>y</sup> Josh. iii. 10, 11.

<sup>z</sup> Psal. lxxxiii. 18.

<sup>a</sup> Exod. ix, 14. See also Ezek. xiv. 17.

<sup>b</sup> Dan. iv. 17.

3. From the wonderful works recorded in Scripture, it is evident, that the *power* of JEHOVAH is alike in *all* the *regions* of the earth. The heathen had strange ideas of divine power. They not only affixed limits to it; but supposed that the power of one god was confined to one territory, and that of another to another. A people who, according to their vain imaginations, were perfectly safe under the protection of their tutelary deity, could derive no benefit from one who was a stranger to their country. If worshipped by a hostile nation, they frequently viewed him as their enemy. They indeed considered their deities in the same light with their earthly princes, whose dominions had certain boundaries, and who protected their subjects at the expence of their neighbours. They seem to have imagined, that the power of particular deities bore an exact proportion to the comparative strength or weakness of the people that worshipped them; or to the grandeur or apparent meanness of their worship. When God sent lions among the heathen who had been placed in the land of Israel by the king of Assyria, they considered the visitation as a token of his displeasure, and therefore of his power; but had no idea that this extended beyond the limits of Palestine. They supposed that he had sent these lions to “slay them, because they knew not the manner of *the God of the land*.”

Why



Why was the army of Sennacherib destroyed ; and why was this signal destruction recorded ? That it might be known, that the God of Israel was the only true God. That haughty conqueror, when he came against Judah, imagined that he had to do with a deity like those of the conquered countries. “ Who was there,” does he say, “ among  
 “ all the gods of the nations that my fathers utterly destroyed, that could deliver his people  
 “ out of mine hand, that your God should be able  
 “ to deliver you ? As the gods of the nations of  
 “ other lands, have not delivered their people out  
 “ of mine hand, so shall not the God of Hezekiah  
 “ deliver his people out of mine hand <sup>d</sup>.” Jerusalem, he concluded, must become an easy prey, because she had not an host of images to defend her ; and the ark, the only thing to which he could give the name, seemed unworthy of being compared with those he had already conquered. “ As  
 “ my hands have found the kingdoms of the idols,  
 “ and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria : shall I not, as I have  
 “ done to Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols <sup>e</sup> ?” He argues, in proof of the imbecility of the God of Israel, from his tame submission to the insults that, as he supposed, Hezekiah had offered to him, in overthrowing his images, and impoverishing his worship : evidently insinuating, that if he could not avenge himself on so poor a prince as Hezekiah, one who had vanquished so many nations could have nothing  
 to

<sup>d</sup> 2 Chron. xxxii. 14. 17.

<sup>e</sup> Isa. x. 10, 11.

to fear from him. Thus he impiously addresses the servants of the king: "If ye say unto me, "We trust in JEHOVAH our God: is not that he, "whose high places, and whose altars Hezekiah "hath taken away, and hath said,—Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?"

Hezekiah, in his solemn address to God, represents this as a controversy in which the honour of deity is peculiarly concerned. He pleads for deliverance, and he obtains it, as a proof of the supreme dominion of JEHOVAH, of his absolute unity as God. He said, "O JEHOVAH God of Israel, "which dwellest between the cherubims, thou "art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth, thou hast made heaven and "earth.—Now therefore,—save thou us out of "his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth "may know that thou art the LORD God, even "thou only." And what answer did he receive? "Thus saith JEHOVAH God of Israel, That which "thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king "of Assyria, I have heard. This is the word "that JEHOVAH hath spoken concerning him,— "Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult is "come up into mine ears, therefore I will put "my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, "and I will turn thee back by the way by which "thou camest &c." This arrogant ravager is described as a wild beast, muzzled and managed at the will of his keeper: and, as if God would give him the most humiliating proof of his folly, he is saved

saved from the stroke of the destroying angel, and suffered to return into his own land, that even *there* he might be a monument of the impotency of his idol, and of the power of JEHOVAH, the God of Israel, whom he had blasphemed. For he was slain by his sons, while “worshipping in the “house of Nifroch *his god* <sup>b</sup>.”

4. The same wonderful works afford a demonstration of the unity of God, as they display his absolute power over *all nature*. The heathen not only divided the nations, but made a partition of nature itself among their false gods. One presided over the thunder, another over the wind. The power of one was greatest on earth, the dominion of another was confined to the sea. One was lord of heaven, another reigned in hell. They had their gods of the hills, and their gods of the valleys; their gods of the woods, and their gods of the waters. But JEHOVAH hath manifested his dominion over all the creatures, and made every part of nature obedient to his word. As he had displayed his sovereignty over the thunder, in rendering it the instrument of destruction in Egypt, he did so in like manner in causing it to cease. Thus Moses said to Pharaoh; “I will spread out my hands to JEHOVAH, “and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there “be any more hail, that thou mayest know how “that the earth is JEHOVAH’s <sup>i</sup>.” He destroyed the frogs which he had sent, and severed the land  
of

<sup>b</sup> 2 Kings xix. 37.

<sup>i</sup> Exod. ix. 29.



of Goshen, where his people dwelt, from the rest of Egypt, so that there were no swarms of flies there; that he might shew that the meanest and minutest creatures were his hosts, and that the Egyptians might know that there was "none like unto JEHOVAH," that he was "the LORD in the midst of the earth<sup>k</sup>." The Egyptians learned to their cost that the wind and sea obeyed him. After they ventured into the channel of the Red Sea, they cried out in despair, "Let us flee from the face of Israel; for JEHOVAH fighteth for them against the Egyptians<sup>l</sup>." The Syrians, when defeated by the Israelites, gave this as the reason; "Their gods are gods of the hills, therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they." But even under the wicked Ahab, God crowned Israel with victory, to vindicate his claim to universal dominion. "There came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith JEHOVAH, "Because the Syrians have said, JEHOVAH is God of the hills, but he is not God of the vallies; therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am JEHOVAH<sup>m</sup>."

In the antediluvian age, the posterity of Cain had openly apostatized from the worship of God, and even the professors of the true religion almost universally lived as if there had been no God. He was therefore pleased, in the most awful manner,

<sup>k</sup> Exod. viii. 10. 22.

<sup>l</sup> Chap. xiv. 25.

<sup>m</sup> 1 Kings xx. 23. 28.

ner, to assert his exclusive claim to the rights of deity, and to display his universal dominion. This he did by the deluge. No one could destroy the earth, but its Creator and Lord. "JEHOVAH said, I will destroy man whom I have created, from the face of the earth, both man and beast. —Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth.—Every living substance that I have made will I destroy<sup>n</sup>." This tremendous dispensation was especially designed as a lesson to succeeding generations. Noah and Shem, in whose line the promise ran, lived for centuries after the flood, as witnesses of the truth of this judgment, and thus of the divine unity and dominion. They could appeal to this awful proof, in contending against the corruptions of the new world, and particularly against the first appearances of idolatry. In succeeding ages, a similar appeal was made, by the professors of the true religion, to the deluge as a fact that could admit of no dispute, and as a decisive evidence of the power and providence of the God whom they adored. Did the wicked say, "How doth God know? can he judge through the dark cloud?" His servants had this reply in readiness; "Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflowed with a flood; which said unto God, Depart from us; and what can the Almighty do for them<sup>o</sup>?"

5. By

<sup>n</sup> Gen. vi. 7, 17.; vii. 4.

<sup>o</sup> Job xxii. 13, 15.—17.

5. By means of these wonderful works, even the *beathen* have been *convinced*, that JEHOVAH was the *God* of heaven and earth. Naaman the Syrian, when delivered from his leprosy, in consequence of using the means prescribed by the prophet of JEHOVAH, made this confession ; “ Be-  
“ hold, now I know that there is no God in all  
“ the earth but in Israel.” Nebuchadnezzar was a bitter enemy to the God of Israel, and a violent persecutor of his people. He had said in his heart, “ I will ascend into heaven, I will ex-  
“ alt my throne above the stars of God ; I will  
“ sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in  
“ the sides of the north.” He, accordingly, had destroyed the temple of God, carried off the sacred vessels, and “ put them in his temple at Ba-  
“ bylon.” Israel had never known an oppressor like him. Others had “ devoured him,” by feeding on his flesh. But this unrelenting adversary accomplished a more thorough destruction : “ Ne-  
“ buchadnezzar king of Babylon hath broken his  
“ bones.” We no where read of a prouder or more insolent enemy of God. He indeed set himself up as a god to his subjects ; for he would have them all to believe as he did, and to worship that idol to which he decreed divine homage. But even this haughty adversary God was “ able to abase.” When he saw the miraculous deliverance of the three faithful witnesses, who would not on any account bow the knee to

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the

p 2 Kings v. 15.

q Isa. xiv. 13.

r 2 Chron. xxxvi. 7.

s Jer. l. 17.

the image which he had erected, he was convinced of the superiority of their God to all his idols. "There is no other God," he said, "who can deliver after this sort." But as his conviction was partial, it seems to have been only of short duration. JEHOVAH would therefore humble him yet more. He must himself be the monument of almighty power. He was as a beast before God, and he had acted the part of a wild beast to his heritage. He is therefore sent to herd with the beasts, and "a beast's heart is given unto him," till he should "know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men." After this awful visitation, we find this once haughty monarch making the following declaration: "Mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou?"

Cyrus was a stranger to the God of Israel. But this God thus addresses him in prophecy, delivered several centuries before he was born; "I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut.—And I will give thee the treasures of  
"darkness,

t Dar. iii. 29.

u Chap. iv. 25.

v Ver. 34, 35.

darkness, and hidden riches of secret places;  
 "that thou mayest know that I JEHOVAH, which  
 "call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel w." And Cyrus was made to *know* this, and seems to have had some sort of persuasion of the truth of divine revelation. Therefore he made this proclamation throughout his dominions: "Thus  
 "saith Cyrus the king of Persia, JEHOVAH the  
 "God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms  
 "of the earth, and he hath charged me to build  
 "him an house at Jerusalem which is in Judah:  
 "Who is there among you of all his people? his  
 "God be with him, and let him go up to Jeru-  
 "salem,—and build the house of JEHOVAH the  
 "God of Israel, (he is the God) x."

In like manner, when Darius knew the miraculous deliverance of Daniel from the power of the lions; he thus proclaimed the power of JEHOVAH to all his subjects: "I make a decree, that  
 "in every dominion of my kingdom, men trem-  
 "ble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he  
 "is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his  
 "kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and  
 "his dominion shall be even unto the end. He  
 "delivereth and rescueth; and he worketh signs  
 "and wonders in heaven and in earth y."

III. The *judgment* that JEHOVAH hath executed on the *gods* of the heathen, affords a striking demonstration of his being the only true God. They could give no protection to their worshippers, for

B 2 they

w Isa. xlv. 2. 3.

x Ezra i. 2. 3.

y Dan. vi. 25 — 27.



they could not deliver themselves. One bitter ingredient in the tenth and last plague that God brought upon the Egyptians, was the destruction of their idol-deities. This proof would he give his people, that he alone had a claim to the character of God. "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast, and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment; I am JEHOVAH <sup>z</sup>." Doubtless, it was also meant as a reproof to the Israelites, for their folly and wickedness in adopting the impure worship of Egypt; and as a warning against such idolatry for the future. For he thus speaks concerning Israel many ages afterwards: "In the day that I lifted up mine hand to bring them forth of the land of Egypt,—then said I unto them, Cast away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am JEHOVAH your God <sup>a</sup>." Some think that the threatening refers to the destruction of those beasts that the Egyptians worshipped. Indeed, as they worshipped four-footed beasts, and fowls, and creeping things, it is natural enough to suppose, that a number of these gods would be involved in the destruction of the first-born; for it extended to both man and beast. But it is scarcely credible, that all the brute creatures which they worshipped were first-born; and we know that they had deities of another kind. Now, this judgment reached *all* their gods. It is therefore necessary to

<sup>z</sup> Exod. xii. 22.

<sup>a</sup> Ezek. xx. 6, 7.

to suppose, that it operated in various ways. It is probable that the divine vengeance extended to all the brutes which they worshipped; and that at the same time their idols were destroyed. The Hebrew writers say, that God “threw down” “all the images of their abominations, so that” “they were broken in pieces<sup>b</sup>.” According to the Chaldee Paraphrast, the idols of metal were melted, those of stone or earth were broken, and those of wood were reduced to ashes. In the writings of the heathen, there are various allusions to this event; although, according to their usual way, mixed with fables<sup>c</sup>.

Similar was the judgment executed on Dagon the idol of the Philistines, when they presumed to bring in the ark, as a captive, into the temple of their god. Their deity fell down prostrate before the ark of God, and was broken in pieces; so that his foolish worshippers were forced to make this acknowledgment to the honour of the God of Israel; “His hand is fore upon us, and “upon Dagon our god<sup>d</sup>.”

JEHOVAH pours contempt on the idols of Babylon, when predicting their fate: “Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the “beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were “heavy laden, they are a burden to the weary “beast<sup>e</sup>.” The prophecy refers to the destruction of these idols by the Persians, who because of the preciousness of the metals of which they were

B 3

made,

<sup>b</sup> Pirke Eliezer. chap. 48.

<sup>c</sup> Vid. Bocharti Hierozoic. vol. i.

p. 343. 616. 644. Witsii Egyptiac. p. 219. Pol. Synops. in loc.

<sup>d</sup> 1 Sam. v. 3, 4. 7.

<sup>e</sup> Isa. xlv. 1.

made, brake them in pieces, and carried them away into their own country, to convert them to other uses. Thus he also speaks by Jeremiah ; “ Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach “ is broken in pieces : her idols are confounded, “ her images are broken in pieces<sup>f</sup>.” And he appeals to the general destruction he should bring on the idols of the heathen, as a proof of their vanity, and of his own sole dominion. “ JEHO- “ VAH is the true God, he is the living God, and “ an everlasting king : at his wrath the earth shall “ tremble, and the nations shall not be able to “ abide his indignation. Thus shall ye say unto “ them, The gods that have not made the heavens, “ and the earth, even they shall perish from the “ earth, and from under these heavens.—They “ are vanity, and the work of errors : in the time “ of their visitation they shall perish. The por- “ tion of Jacob is not like them : for he is the “ former of all things ;—JEHOVAH of hosts is his “ name g.”

IV. The accomplishment of *prophecy* is another proof of the divine unity. This is not merely a proof from facts, but one of the most striking kind that can possibly be conceived. We have a two-fold view of the same fact. We see it first in the book of prophecy ; and then, perhaps, many centuries after, in the book of providence. We view it first, as it exists in the divine mind and immutable decree ; and then, as it is actually brought in-

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<sup>f</sup> Jer. l. 2.

<sup>g</sup> Jer. x. 10, 11. 15, 16.



to being, with the most minute conformity to its prototype. Prophecy is thus a living, a permanent, a perpetual history, that shall continue to shed its precious light on the Church, and on the world, till time shall be no more.

Need we wonder, then, that God should frequently refer to it, in proof of his absolute and unrivalled perfection? When he proclaims that peculiar honour which he had conferred on his ancient people, as the witnesses of his unity, he immediately appeals to the prophecies he had delivered to them, and to their illustrious ancestors, as verified by the event. “Ye are my witnesses, faith JEHOVAH:—that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am HE: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.—I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, faith JEHOVAH, that I am God<sup>h</sup>.”—“I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? yea, there is no god, I know not any.”—“Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is none else, I am God,

B 4

“and

<sup>h</sup> Isa. xliii. 10. 12.

<sup>i</sup> Isa. xliv. 6.—8.

“ and there is none like me, declaring the end  
 “ from the beginning, and from ancient times the  
 “ things that are not yet done, saying, My coun-  
 “ sel shall stand, and I will do all my plea-  
 “ sure.”

We have formerly seen, that God appeals to his power manifested in creation, in proof of his being the only true God. But, in revealing himself to an obstinate and unbelieving people, he does not rest the evidence of his claim in this respect merely on his own testimony, or refer to that particular account of the work of creation which no one but himself could give. He produces another species of evidence, arising from his wonderful works in behalf of his Church, especially in relation to preceding predictions. This is a combined proof of the most convincing kind. Is it true, that the work of creation clearly demonstrates that He, to whom it belongs, is God, and God alone? While the wonderful works of JEHOVAH afford a display of the same almighty power which was manifested in creation; these, as verifying his word of prophecy, in which he has asserted his claim to creative power, uncontestedly prove the justness of his claim to the character of Creator, and at the same time shew that there is, that there can be, “ no God besides “ him.” When, therefore, we find this assertion of creative power mingling itself in the prophecies concerning the deliverance of the Church, we are not to view it in the light of a parenthe-

sis,

\* Isa. xlv. 9, 10. See also chap. xlv. 21, 22.; xlviii. 3.—5. 12. 14. 16.

sis, merely expressing the dignity of the speaker. It is indeed a distinguished branch of that evidence, which is exhibited for the present confirmation of the faith of those who already believe, as declaring the certainty of the event ; and at the same time denotes that the event itself, when it shall take place, shall, in its connexion, afford a sufficient ground of conviction to those who have formerly rejected the divine testimony. Of this kind of evidence, we have various examples. “ Thus saith JEHOVAH thy Redeemer,—I am JEHOVAH that *maketh* all things ; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone ; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself :—that *confirmeth* the word of his servant, and *performeth* the counsel of his messengers ; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be *inhabited* :—that saith to the deep, *Be dry* ; and I will dry up thy rivers : that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall *perform* all my pleasure ; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be *built* ; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be *laid* <sup>1</sup>.” What a beautiful connexion here, between creative power, omniscience, and the completion of prophecy in wonderful operations ! To the same purpose is the following language : “ Thus saith JEHOVAH,—Ask me of *things to come* concerning my sons.—I have *made* the earth, and *created* man upon it. —I have raised him up,” that is, Cyrus, “ in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways <sup>m</sup>.” In the use of this argument, faith may either descend

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xliv. 24.—28.      <sup>m</sup> Isa. xlv. 11.—13. See also Jer. li. 14, 15.

ascend from the creative power of God already believed, to a firm persuasion of the accomplishment of the prophecy; or, as excited by the manifestation of God's faithfulness and power in fulfilling the prophecy, it may ascend to a firm persuasion of his being the Creator and the only true God. Faith, indeed, as it still respects the power of God, finds great encouragement in viewing this perfection as manifested in creation. For there is no work, which it is called to believe, that can be too hard for Him who formed all things of nothing. Hence Abraham, when called to believe against hope, that he should be the father of a seed like the sand of the sea, found no obstacle to believing this, while he credited the doctrine of creation. "He believed God,—who calleth the things that be not as though they were<sup>n</sup>." Hence also we are commanded to commit our souls to him, as to a faithful Creator<sup>p</sup>: where his infinite faithfulness and almighty power are conjoined, as affording a strong ground of confidence.

V. JEHOVAH hath manifested that he is the one true God, by *answering* the *prayers* of his worshippers: and many remarkable instances of this are recorded, for confirming our faith in this important doctrine. Elijah proposed to the people of Israel, that the decision of the controversy between JEHOVAH and Baal should turn on this hinge. He said to them, "Call ye on the name  
" of

<sup>n</sup> Rom. iv. 17.

<sup>p</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 19.



“ of your gods, and I will call on the name of JEHOVAH : and the God that answereth by fire, “ let him be God.” They all approved of this as a most equitable condition. The false prophets “ called on the name of Baal from morning “ even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But “ there was no voice, nor any that *answered*.— “ When mid-day was past, and they prophesied “ until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.” For the gods of the nations “ have ears, but they hear not.” The fire from heaven having consumed the sacrifice offered by Elijah, the multitude were convinced, that the God whom he worshipped was the only true God. “ When all the people saw it, they “ fell on their faces : and they said, JEHOVAH he “ is the God ; JEHOVAH he is the God P.” In like manner, the deliverance which God gave the Jews from Sennacherib, when he sent forth his angel, and slew an hundred and eighty-five thousand of the Assyrians, was in answer to the prayer of Hezekiah. This good king sought deliverance, expressly as an evidence that JEHOVAH alone had a right to adoration. The plea was accepted, and the deliverance was given as the answer of his prayers. Hezekiah said, “ O JEHOVAH our God, “ I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, “ that all the kingdoms of the earth may know “ that thou art JEHOVAH God, even thou only.” And this was the gracious answer : “ Thus saith “ JEHOVAH



“JEHOVAH the God of Israel, That which thou  
 “hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of  
 “Assyria, I have heard <sup>q</sup>.” On this striking part  
 of the character of her God, that he heareth prayer,  
 the Church grounds her confidence as to the  
 conversion of all nations to the faith: “O thou  
 “that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh  
 “come.—By terrible things in righteousness wilt  
 “thou answer us, O God of our salvation; who  
 “art the confidence of all the ends of the earth,  
 “and of them that are afar off on the sea <sup>r</sup>.”

Often hath our God vindicated his claim to  
 this character, by answering the prayers of his  
 Church in the time of her necessity, even when  
 his operation hath been nowise miraculous. Hence  
 Jeremiah uttered this language, during a famine  
 occasioned by a great drought; “Are there any  
 “among the vanities of the Gentiles that can  
 “cause rain? or can the heavens give showers?  
 “art not thou HE, O JEHOVAH our God?” HE,  
 who alone can give rain? “therefore we will  
 “wait upon thee, for thou hast made all these  
 “things <sup>s</sup>.” He signally manifested his power in  
 this respect, in answer to the prayer of Elijah,  
 both in judgment and in mercy. “He prayed  
 “earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained  
 “not on the earth by the space of three years and  
 “six months. And he prayed again, and the  
 “heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth  
 “her fruit <sup>t</sup>.”

#### vi. The

<sup>q</sup> 2 Kings xix. 19, 20.

<sup>r</sup> Psal. lxxv. 2. 5.

<sup>s</sup> Jer. xiv. 22.

<sup>t</sup> James v. 17, 18.

VI. The LORD hath still manifested that he is the only living and true God, by his *faithfulness* to his Church, and by *remembering* his *covenant*, especially when she hath turned to him. Therefore Solomon thus addresses him; "JEHOVAH God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or in earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants, that walk before thee with all their heart." Of this faithfulness the Jews were standing witnesses, while they adhered to him. In various respects, it was successively attested by miraculous operation. As long as the land, according to the divine commandment, enjoyed her Sabbaths, they received a double harvest; and while all the males, who were able to travel, were assembled at Jerusalem during the solemn feasts, the enemy never "desired their land." The heathen could boast nothing of this nature. Their gods made no difference between obedience and disobedience.

VII. The history of the work of *redemption*, in its various stages from the fall downwards, is one continued demonstration of the unity of God. It displays an evident unity of design and operation. The eye, that views the divine dispensations partially, may oppose one to another. It may oppose the patriarchal dispensation to that of the law, and both these to the gospel. Hence some of the early heretics represented the God of the Jews as quite a different being from the God of the Christians.

tians. But those who view this matter fairly and impartially, discern the most beautiful harmony. They perceive that the one illustrates and confirms the other ; that while the Mosaic dispensation derives its perfection from the Christian, the Christian derives its evidence from the Mosaic ; and that both hinge on that given to the patriarchs. Thus the Church finds the most abundant reason for this song ; “ He is the Rock, his work “ is perfect v.” “ As for God, his way is perfect. “ —For who is God save JEHOVAH ? and who is “ a rock save our God w ?”

As there is the most beautiful harmony in all the parts of divine revelation, although written in a great variety of ages ; as they have all one great subject, the redemption of the Church by the Son of God in the nature of man ; as one spirit evidently pervades and animates the whole, uniformly “ testifying the sufferings of Christ, and “ the glory that should follow ;” a similar harmony is discernible in the operations of Providence. Of these we have an almost uninterrupted record for more than four thousand years. But they all evidently concentrate in one point. They are all directed to the work of redemption. They all conspire towards its accomplishment ; some of them immediately, and others more remotely. The first gospel-promise, concerning the seed of the woman bruising the head of the serpent, is a key to all the succeeding history of Providence, in reference to individuals or to nations, to the Church

Church or the world. We see the earth peopled, and in a little almost entirely stripped of its inhabitants; cities built, and razed; empires founded, and brought to ruin; all in relation to that kingdom which shall never have an end, and that dominion which shall not be given to another people. "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people, according to the number of the children of Israel." It was for the sake of his Church, and as her Redeemer and Holy One, that he "sent to Babylon, and brought down all their nobles." When he warns her not to be "afraid of the Assyrian," her interest in the Messiah is pointed out as her security and consolation; "It shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed *because of the anointing*."

It was doubtless with a design to impress the Israelites with a sense of the unity, both of his essence, and of his love to the Church, that God so frequently designed himself from the relation which he bore to their fathers. He was pleased to take such names in succession; as if he meant to inform them, that notwithstanding the lapse of time, and the change of persons, he is still the same. When he appeared to Moses, and gave him a commission to proclaim liberation to his captives in Egypt, he commanded him to deliver  
this



this message ; “ JEHOVAH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, “ and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you : “ this is my name for ever, and my memorial unto all generations <sup>a</sup>.” As he uses this language in the present time, especially in the strictest connexion with that wonderful name, I AM THAT I AM ; while it proves the unchangeableness of his love to these patriarchs, as still existing in a separate state, it proclaims the same unchangeable love to all their spiritual seed.

The Redeemer of his Church indeed assumed various designations of the same kind, according to her situation, and the progress of his work. When by an awful display of his justice he had separated the family of Noah from all the other inhabitants of the earth, it appeared proper to his infinite wisdom to separate one branch of this family from the rest. He therefore took the character of “ JEHOVAH the God of Shem <sup>b</sup> ;” as the promise was to run in the line of his posterity. After being known by this character for several generations, when all the posterity of Shem were more or less corrupted, he separated one individual, not merely from the other families of this race, but from his father’s family, as his true worshipper, and the ancestor of that illustrious personage in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. He revealed himself as “ the God of “ Abraham.” Only one of all the sons of Abraham being the child of promise ; he also called himself

<sup>a</sup> Exod. iii. 15.

<sup>b</sup> Gen. ix. 26.



himself “ the God of Isaac :” and with these two he conjoined the name of Jacob, as he loved him, while his brother Esau was rejected. In the history of Jacob, we have a striking instance of his zeal for preserving the doctrine of the divine unity. When Laban and he entered into a covenant, Laban used this form of swearing ; “ The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their Father, judge betwixt us.” But “ Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac<sup>c</sup>,” that is, by the object of his fear. Jacob would not swear in the terms used by Laban. For he mentioned “ the God of Abraham,” as at the same time the God of Nahor, and of their father Terah. Now, we are told that Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor, “ served other gods, on the other side of the flood,” or great river Euphrates<sup>d</sup>. Laban swore by “ the God of Abraham,” before he was separated from his father’s house : Jacob would swear only by that God of Abraham, who was worshipped by his immediate father Isaac, who had called Abraham from idolatry, and given him the promise of salvation in the seed of Isaac\*.

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<sup>c</sup> Gen. xxxi. 53.

<sup>d</sup> Josh. xxiv. 2.

\* Here the remarks of a very ingenious writer merit our attention. Speaking of the pretensions made by other nations, allied to the Israelites, to the promise of the Messiah, he says : “ It is these jealousies, and these pretensions,—that gave rise to the custom of calling God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob : for though he might as well have been called the God of Adam, the God of Enoch, and the God of Noah, soasmuch as all these patriarchs were also depositaries of the promise of the Messiah : yet it is probable that God was called so, be-  
cause

When God had separated a peculiar people for himself, to express the nearness of their relation, the pleasure he had in them, especially as emblems of his spiritual seed, and to distinguish himself from all false gods, he took the name of “the God of Israel.” He did not borrow a new designation from any individual among them: for he viewed Israel, in their collective capacity, as “his son, his first-born.” He still delighted, however, in recognising his relation to their pious progenitors; and in assuring them, that he would “perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which he had sworn from the days of old.”

Thus was God pleased to link one revelation with another; that he might, in the most expressive manner, teach his people the importance of the doctrine of the divine unity, and shew them the necessity of being on their guard against imposture; while he at the same time gave them the most satisfying evidence that they had nothing of this kind to fear, when addressed by the God of their fathers. Such care did he manifest in this respect, that, in different instances, he in this manner connected the distinct revelations that he

“cause of the particular promises that had been made to Abraham, secondly to Isaac, and lastly to Jacob, and in opposition to the pretensions of some people near neighbours to the Israelites, and jealous of their hopes: The God of *Abraham*, and not of *Lot*, as the Ammonites and Moabites, *Lot*’s posterity, pretended; the God of *Isaac*, and not of *Ismael*, as the Ishmaelites pretended; the God of *Jacob*, and not of *Esau*, as the Edomites, who were the offspring of *Eau*, pretended.” Allix’s *Reflections upon the Books of the Holy Scriptures*, Vol. i. p. 80.

c Mic. vii. 20.

he made to the same persons. When he appeared to Abram in the plain of Mamre, he reminded him that, although his situation was changed, he was still under the protection of the same God. He said to him; “ I am JEHOVAH that *brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees*, to give thee this “ land, to inherit it <sup>f</sup>.” When he commanded Jacob to leave Mesopotamia, and return to his own kindred; that he might have no doubt as to the certainty of the call, and that he might know that it was the same God who had “ fed him all “ his life long,” and that his power was the same in all places, and at all times, he referred him to what had taken place many years before, saying; “ I am the *God of Bethel*, where thou anointedst “ the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto “ me <sup>g</sup>.” Afterwards, he made himself known to Jacob by the same peculiar character. He said to him; “ Arise, go up to Bethel,—and make “ there an altar to God that *appeared unto thee*, “ *when thou fleddest* from the face of Esau thy “ brother <sup>h</sup>.”

When the glorious consequences of the ascension of Christ are foretold, it is in this language: “ The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham <sup>i</sup>.” In conformity to this, and to illustrate the unity of the object of worship, and the unity of his work for the redemption of the Church, Peter declares to the Jewish council; “ The God of

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“ Abraham,

<sup>f</sup> Gen. xv. 7.

<sup>g</sup> Gen. xxxi. 13.

<sup>h</sup> Gen. xxxv. 1.

<sup>i</sup> Psal. xlvii. 9.

“ Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God  
“ of our fathers, hath glorified his son Jesus <sup>k</sup>.”

He had been known, for a long succession of ages, as “ the God of Israel,” and as his Redeemer. He had claimed this character, as attested by many temporal and typical redemptions ; and especially as JEHOVAH, “ who brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt ;” and afterwards, in reference to the deliverance from Babylon, as he “ who led the seed of the house “ of Israel out of the north country <sup>l</sup>.” In the language of prophecy, he had said to his own Son, as the glorious Antitype, and as the Representative of that spiritual Israel whom he had chosen to be his peculiar treasure ; “ Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified <sup>m</sup>.” Now although, in the New Testament, he is called “ the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob,” and also “ the God of Israel <sup>n</sup>,” in order to illustrate his unity both of essence and of operation ; yet, the spiritual redemption being accomplished, he is especially designed in relation to this. The God, and the Father, of Israel especially delights to be known as “ the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” that true Israel in whom he hath been so signally glorified.

VIII. That JEHOVAH is the only true God, hath appeared from a variety of proofs, recorded in Scripture-history, of his power in *changing the heart*. He, even he only “ knoweth the hearts  
“ of

<sup>k</sup> Acts iii. 13.

<sup>l</sup> Jer. xxiii. 7, 8.

<sup>m</sup> Isa. xlix. 3.

<sup>n</sup> Luke i. 68.

“ of all the children of men <sup>o</sup> ;” and he only can change them. In the former respect he displays his infinite wisdom ; in the latter, his almighty power ; in both, he appears to be God alone. Hence, when he promises a revival to his Church, by the gracious effusion of his Spirit, he declares that this should be to her an indubitable evidence of his exclusive right to the honours of deity : “ Ye shall know that I am JEHOVAH, when I have “ opened your graves, O my people, and brought “ you up out of your graves, and shall put my “ Spirit in you, and ye shall live <sup>p</sup> .” Both by the answer of prayer, and by the power of divine grace on his heart, Manasseh “ knew that JEHO- “ VAH he was God <sup>q</sup> .”

So great is the natural obduracy of the heart, that no power can subdue it but that which is divine. Hence it is described as a heart of stone ; and the breaking of it is claimed by God as his prerogative : “ Is not my word like as a fire, “ and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in “ pieces <sup>r</sup> ?” Such is its deceitfulness, that God only can so know the disease as to apply an effectual remedy. He alone can discover it to the sinner, because he alone is perfectly acquainted with it. Therefore he says, “ The heart is de- “ ceitful above all things ;—who can know it ? I “ JEHOVAH search the heart, and try the reins <sup>s</sup> .” This work also declares, that it is he only “ who “ formed the spirit of man within him.” For as

C 3

the

<sup>o</sup> 1 Kings viii. 39.

<sup>p</sup> Ezek. xxxvii. 13, 14.

<sup>q</sup> 2 Chron. xxxiii. 13.

<sup>r</sup> Jer. xxiii. 29.

<sup>s</sup> Chap. xvii. 9, 10.



the renovation of the heart is called a creation, who can thus renew the heart, but he who created it at first? When the Psalmist refers to the wonderful works of JEHOVAH in proof of his exclusive deity, he particularly specifies this work of mercy. "Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O JEHOVAH, neither are there any works like unto thy works.—Thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone. —For great is thy mercy toward me; and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell †."

Is the God whom we profess to adore, the only living and true God? Let us flee from idolatry in every form. While we detest the worship of false gods, or of saints and angels who are our fellow-servants; let us beware of the love of the world. For covetousness is idolatry. He, who is God alone, hath a rightful claim to our whole hearts. This claim he makes on us, on the very ground of his absolute unity: "Hear, O Israel, JEHOVAH our God is one JEHOVAH. And thou shalt love JEHOVAH thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might †." Let us say unto him in sincerity, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." From him alone let us look for salvation. He only who is God, can be a Saviour. To give the name to any other, is blasphemy. Our God is equally jealous of his honour in this respect, as in that of his essential unity. "I," saith he, "even I am JEHO-

"VAH,

† Psal. lxxvi. 8. 10. 13.

u Deut. vi. 4, 5.

“VAH, and besides me there is no Saviour.”—  
 “There is no God else besides me, a just God  
 “and a Saviour, there is none besides me. Look  
 “unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the  
 “earth : for I am God, and there is none else v.”

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## SECTION II.

*The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity,—Proved from  
 the History of Creation ;—of the Fall ;—of the  
 Confusion of Tongues ;—of Redemption.*

WE have seen, that the preservation of the doctrine of the divine unity, was one special end of the revelation given to the Israelites ; and that even the history contained in the sacred volume was meant to be a hedge around this important doctrine. But while the all-wise God manifested such care with respect to the unity of his essence, he would not conceal from his Church the manner of his subsistence in three distinct persons. This doctrine, indeed, like many others of the greatest moment, was more obscurely revealed before the coming of the Messiah. To so gross and carnal a people was God pleased to reveal himself, and in a period of such general polytheism, that it appeared proper to his infinite wisdom, to unfold this mystery more sparingly.

The doctrines of essential unity and plurality of persons, are so tempered together in the language of inspiration, that while the Church could have no excuse for turning aside to polytheism, she could with as little reason conclude that her God subsisted in a single person. It is not merely in the doctrines, precepts or promises, that we are to search for this mystery of a plurality in unity. It so frequently beams forth, even in the historic page, that we are under a necessity of believing, that it was not one of the least designs that God had in view, in favouring the Church with the historical parts of Scripture, more fully to reveal this doctrine, as well as to preserve it uncorrupted.

The doctrine of a plurality, appears in the very first words of inspiration. God would not record the history of *creation*, without informing the Church, that the character of Creator was by no means to be confined to one person. It has often been observed, that this is taught in the words rendered *God created*, where we have a noun in the plural, joined with a verb in the singular number, plainly expressing a plurality in unity. That this is the genuine sense of the passage, appears from the work ascribed, in the next verse, to the Spirit of God, who is said to have “moved  
“on the face of the waters.” By modern Jews, whom some Christians have followed, this expression has been rendered, “a wind of God,” or “a mighty wind.” But the firmament, or expanse, was not created till the second day. This  
includes

includes the atmosphere which furrounds our earth : for the fowl is said to “ fly above the earth “ in the open firmament of heaven <sup>v</sup>.” Now, it cannot reasonably be supposed, that there could be a mighty wind, or any wind at all, before the existence of an atmosphere.

If we turn to the gospel-history, we find a third person mentioned as engaged in the work of creation. “ All things were made by” that Word, who “ in the beginning existed with God <sup>w</sup>.”

This plurality appears still more expressly, when the sacred historian gives an account of the creation of man : “ And God said, Let *us* make man “ in *our* image, after *our* likeness.” But it is a plurality in unity : “ So God created man in *his* “ own image <sup>x</sup>.” It has been justly observed, that to this the language of Elihu, and of the royal Preacher, agrees : “ None saith, Where is “ God my *Makers* <sup>y</sup> ;” and, “ Remember now thy “ *Creators* <sup>z</sup>.” Nothing can be more absurd than the various attempts which have been made to shew, that this language may be otherwise understood. God could never speak in this manner to angels, or to any second causes. For to whomsoever these words were addressed, they must have been co-operators with God in this divine work. They must have assisted him in making man. Philo the Jew expressly says, that these words, *Let us make*, declare a plurality <sup>a</sup>. That the Jewish writers in general view this language as including

<sup>v</sup> Gen. i. 20.    <sup>w</sup> John i. 1.—3.    <sup>x</sup> Gen. i. 26, 27.    <sup>y</sup> Job xxxv. 10.

<sup>z</sup> Eccles. xii. 1.

<sup>a</sup> De Confus. Ling. p. 270.

including a mystery, not to be made known to the vulgar, and indeed studiously concealed by them from their abhorrence of Christianity, has been elsewhere demonstrated<sup>b</sup>. It is therefore unnecessary to enlarge here. I shall only add, that the modern Jews are so fully convinced that the doctrine of a plurality is contained in these words, as to wish to alter the reading. Instead of *Let us make man*, they incline to read, *Let man be made*; although the Samaritan text, the Septuagint, the Talmudists, and all their translations, whether ancient or modern, express the language in the same manner with our version.

The same important doctrine is introduced in the history of the *Fall*. That three-one God, who said, "Let us make man after our image," in the same character laments the loss of this image. "JEHOVAH God said, Behold, the man is become "as one of us;" or, as some read the passage, "Behold the man, who was as one of us<sup>c</sup>!" Here Philo observes; "These words, *as one of us*, "are not put for one, but for more than one<sup>d</sup>." The learned Allix has remarked, that the ancient Jewish writers maintain, that God "speaks not "this to the angels, who had no common likeness "to the unity or essence of God, but to Him who "was the celestial Adam, who is one with God<sup>e</sup>." To whom this character applies, we learn from the Targum of Jonathan on the place, who here speaks of "the only begotten in heaven."

This

<sup>b</sup> See Vindication of the Doctrine of Scripture, &c. vol. i. 5.—8.

<sup>c</sup> Gen. iii. 22.

<sup>d</sup> De Confus. ubi sup.

<sup>e</sup> Judgment of the Jewish Church, p. 42.



This doctrine is also taught in the history of the *Confusion of Tongues*. “JEHOVAH said,—Go “to, let us go down, and there confound their “language <sup>f</sup>.” Here the Jews repeat their contemptible subterfuge, that God addressees his “house of judgment,” that is, created angels. For it is an established doctrine with them, that “God does nothing without previously consulting “with his family above <sup>g</sup>.” But it has justly been observed, that these words, if spoken to angels, would imply that God were one of them, or that he descended in the same manner with them, by a real change of place. Besides, in a moment to change one language into many, and to infuse these into the minds of men, who were utter strangers to them before, so that they should entirely forget their former modes of speech, is a work that far surpasses the power of angels, and can be accomplished by no being but that God, with whom to will and to do is the same <sup>h</sup>.

It must be evident to every one, who reads the history of the Old Testament with any degree of attention, that an *Angel* is often introduced as speaking the language, performing the works, and accepting the worship, which exclusively belong to the Supreme Being. In other words, one, who is undoubtedly a divine person, often appears in a delegated character. Now, while it was the will of God in this manner constantly to remind his Church of the economy of redemption, he at  
the

<sup>f</sup> Gen. xi. 7.

<sup>g</sup> Maimonides, *More Nevochim*, P. ii. c. 6.

<sup>h</sup> Vid. Bocharti *Phaleg*. lib. i. c. 15.

the same time taught her a distinction of persons in the divine essence. It was this Angel who appeared to Abraham on different occasions, to Hagar, to Jacob, to Moses, to Joshua, to the Israelites at Bochim, to Gideon, to Manoah and his wife. But I enter not into a particular consideration of these appearances, having endeavoured to illustrate the character of this divine Messenger in another place <sup>i</sup>. There it has also been proved, that the law was given to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, by the second person of the adorable Trinity in the character of the Angel of JEHOVAH <sup>k</sup>. It deserves particular attention, that at the very time that the God of Israel gave his people a law, by which they were to be distinguished from all the idolatrous nations around, one special design of which was to preserve the doctrine of the divine unity ;—at the very time that he pronounced that leading precept, “Thou shalt have no “other gods before me ;” he, according to the Sacred History viewed in its connexion, sustained the character of an Angel, and was pleased to communicate the knowledge of this fact to his people. How can these apparent contradictions be reconciled, but by admitting that it was the will of God to reveal himself to his Church, as at the same time possessing essential unity and personal plurality ?

The more ancient Jewish writers declare, that two persons were engaged in promulgating the law.

<sup>i</sup> Vindication of the Doctrine of Scripture, vol. i. p. 99.—117.

<sup>k</sup> Ibid. p. 268.—274. 280.—283. 525.

law. They say ; “ The two first precepts were  
 “ spoken by the Supreme Spirit, but he spoke all  
 “ the rest by his Glory, who is called *El Shaddai*,  
 “ known to the fathers ; by whom the prophets  
 “ foretold future events ; who is called *Jah* ; in  
 “ whom the Name of God is ; the Beloved of  
 “ God who dwelt in the temple ; and the Mouth  
 “ of the LORD ; and the Face of the LORD ; and  
 “ the Rock ; and that Goodness which Moses saw,  
 “ when he could not see God<sup>1</sup>.” Elsewhere they  
 call him “ the *Schechinah*, by whom we draw  
 “ near to God, and present our supplications to  
 “ him ; who is that Angel in whom the name of  
 “ God is, who is himself called God and JEHO-  
 “ VAH.” The change of person, in the promulga-  
 tion of the law, asserted by these writers, is evi-  
 dently a mere fancy. But their language deserves  
 attention ; as it shews how fully they were con-  
 vinced of the doctrine of a plurality in unity,  
 when they introduced it in this manner.

It has been universally admitted by the friends  
 of revelation, that the great end which God hath  
 in view in the work of *Redemption*, is the display  
 of his own adorable perfections. But there is  
 doubtless another, although less attended to, no-  
 wise incompatible with this, nay, itself an emi-  
 nent branch of the supreme end. This is the ma-  
 nifestation of the mystery of the Trinity, and of  
 the mode of subsistence peculiar to each person in  
 the divine essence. This must undoubtedly be  
 viewed as included in the one great design of the  
 all-wise

<sup>1</sup> Bechaj, fol. 88. col. 3. 4. ap. Wits. Oecon. Fœd. lib. iv. c. 4.

all-wise God, in our redemption ; and it is evident that he hath still kept it in eye, in the revelation given to the Church, and especially in the history of that work, as it is recorded in the gospels. We may trace the doctrine of a Trinity in the accounts given of the old creation ; but it appears with far superior evidence in the history of the new. This corresponds to the superior greatness of the work, and to the brighter and more extensive display of divine perfection.

Such was the state of the Church, as to admit of a more full manifestation of this mystery. It was more obscurely revealed to the patriarchs, and under the Mosaic economy. This was analogous to the general character of the revelation then made ; as well as to the state of the Church, yet in her infancy, and exposed to constant temptations to polytheism, from the situation of all the surrounding nations. But “ when the fullness of “ the time was come,” that the gospel should be preached to every creature, and the kingdom of Satan fall as lightning from heaven, in the overthrow of heathen darkness ; there were no such impediments to the more clear revelation of this mysterious doctrine. The rest of the divine conduct indeed rendered this necessary. God had now “ sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made “ under the law, to redeem them that were under “ the law.” The ends of this mission could not be accomplished, without a full revelation of the character of this illustrious Messenger. He could not otherwise receive that homage from the Church,

Church, which he merited as her Redeemer, and which was necessary, in order to her salvation. Now, his character, as essentially the Son of God, and at the same time a divine Messenger, could not be properly unfolded, without a declaration both of the paternity of the First Person, and of that wonderful dispensation according to which the Second, although equal in power and glory, voluntarily “ emptied himself.” Nor could the unity of the work of redemption, as pervading all the dispensations given to the Church, and the beautiful harmony of the law and the gospel, be otherwise displayed. Without a full revelation of this mystery, how could it have been known that he who appeared in the end of ages as sent of God, was the very same person who had formerly led the Church, as the Angel of his face ; that He who now brought spiritual redemption to his folk, was no other than that Angel-Redeemer who had already so frequently delivered them from temporal calamities ?

If this mystery be unknown or disbelieved, there can be no faith in Christ as the Mediator between God and men. For he who believes not that the Son is in the Father, and the Father in the Son, as to identity of essence, while at the same time there is a distinction of persons, denies the voluntary subjection of the Son to the Father in the eternal covenant, and thus the whole foundation of his merit and of our salvation. In relation to the work of our redemption, and in the history given of it, are revealed various internal actions



actings of the divine persons towards each other, as well as those of an external nature. The Father appoints, gives, sends, prepares a human nature for his Son: the Son undertakes, gives himself, comes, assumes this nature.

From the history given of the conception of Christ, we find that three divine persons were engaged in the creation of this "new thing in the earth." The Father appears in the character of "the Highest;" the Third Person, as "the Holy Ghost," and "the Power of the Highest;" and the Second, as "the Son of God <sup>m</sup>." When this wonderful Person, the incarnate Word, was to be manifested to Israel at his baptism, each divine Person concurred in the work. The Father testified his presence and approbation by a voice from the excellent glory, announcing Jesus as his beloved Son; and the Holy Ghost descended like a dove, and rested on him <sup>n</sup>. The history of his death, viewed in its connexion, affords a proof of a similar kind. As "it pleased JEHOVAH," in the person of the Father, sustaining the character of Judge, to bruise the Son as our Surety; and as he, having power over his own life, commended his spirit into the hands of his Father, thus presenting unto him a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling favour; he did so "through the Eternal Spirit." The same thing appears from the resurrection of Jesus. He was "powerfully declared to be the "Son of God in his resurrection from the dead <sup>o</sup>;" for he had "power to take again" that life which

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<sup>m</sup> Luke i. 35.<sup>n</sup> Mat. iii. 16, 17.<sup>o</sup> Rom. i. 4.

no one could take from him. This work is frequently ascribed to God, where the term evidently denotes the First Person. "God hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee <sup>p</sup>." As he was "put to death in the flesh, he was quickened by the Spirit," by that Spirit of holiness, "by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison <sup>c</sup>." Nor is this less evident from the account given of the effusion of the Spirit. This is undoubtedly a divine work; and it is described as belonging to each adorable Person. Jesus had foretold that the Comforter should come, that himself should send him <sup>r</sup>, and that he should at the same time be sent by the Father <sup>s</sup>. Accordingly, from the account given of this wonderful event by the apostle Peter, which is left on record for the instruction of the Church, we find that each divine Person was engaged in accomplishing it: "Jesus having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear <sup>t</sup>."

It is undeniable, that one special end, which Christ had in view in his miraculous works, was to confirm his doctrine with respect to his equality with the Father. When he gave thanks at the tomb of Lazarus, before raising him from the dead, it was because of the people who stood by, that they might believe that the Father had

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sent

p Acts xiii. 33.

q 1 Pet. iii. 18, 19.

r John xvi. 7

s Chap. xiv. 26.

t Acts ii. 33.

sent him ; and sent him as a Messenger invested with divine power, because essentially possessing divine perfection. For he had previously said to his disciples : “ This sickness is not unto death, “ but for the glory of God, that the Son of God “ might be glorified thereby ; ” and taught Martha, that if she “ would believe, she would see the “ glory of God,” in seeing the manifestation of that power which essentially belonged to himself, as “ the Resurrection and the Life u.” When he cured the man sick of the palsy, it was in order to prove that he had “ power on earth to forgive “ sin ; ” while he admitted the principle held by the scribes, that no one could forgive sins but God only v. On different occasions he refers to his miraculous works, as irrefragable evidences of his having the same essence with the Father ; and of the mutual inexistence, as some have expressed it, of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Father, in respect of this essential unity, while there is at the same time a real distinction of persons. When his enemies accused him of blasphemy, because he said, “ I am the Son of God,” “ making himself God ; ” he replied, “ If I do “ not the works of my Father, believe me not. “ But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe “ the works ; that ye may know and believe that “ the Father is in me, and I in him w.” To Philip, when desiring to see the Father, he said, “ Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the “ Father

u John xi. 4. 25. 40. 42. comp.

v Mark ii. 7. 10.

w John x. 33. 36.—38.

“ Father in me ; or else believe me for the very  
 “ work’s sake x.” The Evangelist John, when referring to the signs recorded in the preceding history, subjoins this declaration ; “ These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Son  
 “ of God y.” That he appropriates this character to Jesus, as expressive of supreme deity, is evident from the uniform tenor of the gospel which bears his name z.

The doctrine of the Trinity is peculiarly elucidated by the history of redemption ; as it does not merely exhibit all the adorable Persons as engaged in this work, but ascribes a peculiar operation to each Person. The contrivance of our redemption is ascribed to the Father ; the purchase of it to the Son ; and the effectual application of this purchased redemption to the Holy Spirit. The Father sends his Son as our Surety ; the Son cheerfully comes in this character ; and the Holy Spirit is sent by both. The purpose of election is more immediately ascribed to the Father ; the objects of his love are all chosen in Christ ; and they, who were thus chosen from eternity, are in time chosen out of the world, and separated for himself, by the renewing and sanctifying work of the Spirit.

Nor is this all. The peculiar operation of each Person, in the work of our salvation, is perfectly analogous to the order of subsistence in the Holy Trinity ; and thus beautifully illustrates the

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mutual

x John xiv. 11.      y John xx. 31.      z See, for a farther illustration of this subject, Vindication of the Doctrine of Scripture, &c. Book ii. chap. 6. *Of the Evidence of our Saviour’s Divinity, from his Miracles.*

mutual relations of the divine Persons. All the external works of God, indeed, are common to each Person ; as the divine nature is the same indivisible principle of operation. Yet these works are distinctly ascribed to the three Persons, because each Person operates according to the order of subsistence. In the old creation, the Father called all things into being, by his co-essential Word, communicating life immediately by the Spirit, as exercising a generating power on the unformed mass. When God created man, the First Person formed him by the Second, as his essential Image, giving him life, both natural and moral, by the Third as “ the Spirit of life<sup>a</sup>.” Yet this implies no inferiority, or mere instrumentality, in any of the adorable Persons ; but only the most perfect order and harmony. The case is the same in the new creation. It seems most consistent with divine wisdom, that he who is first in the order of subsistence should rather *send* than be *sent* ; that the Son, who is “ the image of the invisible God,” should procure the restoration of that blessed image lost by sin ; and that he, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, should be sent by both, to quicken those who are spiritually dead. This distinct operation indeed, as it corresponds with the order of subsistence, beautifully harmonizes with the distinguishing character belonging to each Person. He, who is essentially the Father, assumes the character of paternity, in a federal respect, towards those

<sup>a</sup> Gen. i. 27. ; ii. 7.



those who are orphans and aliens. The only-begotten Son of God is sent forth, made under the law, that they may "receive the adoption of sons," and appears as "the first-born among many brethren." The adorable Spirit, "the breath of JEHOVAH," breathes on the slain, that they may live; giving them a new heart and a right spirit. He, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, unites the sinner to both.

Is it "life eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent?" Hath no one the Father, who "denieth the Son?" Can no one honour the Father, "who honoureth not the Son?" Is it the Spirit alone who quickeneth, and who teacheth us to "know the things that are freely given us of God?" Can no man say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost?" Is it through Christ that "we have access by one Spirit unto the Father?" Let us bless God for the revelation of the mystery of a Trinity in unity; and especially because he hath revealed it so clearly in the history of our redemption, in relation to that work in which a peculiar operation belongs to each adorable Person, in which the love of a three-one God is so wonderfully displayed, in which we discern so blessed a harmony, not only of divine perfections, but of divine Persons! In all our worship, let us view God according to this revelation, ascribing glory to him "who is, and who was, and who is to come, and to the Seven Spirits which

“are before his throne, and to Jesus Christ, who  
“is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten  
“from the dead, and the prince of the kings of  
“the earth.” Let us earnestly desire communion  
with this three-one God ; with the Father, in his  
love as the spring of our salvation ; with the Son,  
in all that grace which he hath purchased by his  
blood ; and with the Holy Ghost, in the whole  
extent of his efficacious operation. In order to  
this, let us press after union with Christ, that in  
him we may be united to the Father by that one  
Spirit who proceeds from both, and who is con-  
ferred by both as the Spirit of adoption. Let us  
cultivate love to the brethren, as members of the  
same mystical body, desiring to be “one heart  
“and one soul ;” that although many, we may  
be one, and thus be assimilated, in our weak mea-  
sure, to the blessed Trinity in respect of unity ;  
as Jesus prays in behalf of his Church ;—“That  
“they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in  
“me, and I in thee ; that they also may be one  
“in us.—I in them, and thou in me, that they  
“may be made perfect in one ; and that the  
“world may know that thou hast sent me, and  
“hast loved them, as thou hast loved me b.”

## SECT.

## SECTION III.

*Of the Wisdom of God.—Of his Power.—Of that character, The LORD of Hosts.*

IN the sacred volume, we have an history of the divine perfections. These are not only declared in a doctrinal way, but also historically delineated. They are not merely exhibited as objects of faith; by their wonderful effects, they become as it were visible to the very senses of men. Often, in one event, one perfection appears more conspicuous than others, like an “apple of gold, set in pictures of silver.” In another, different perfections beam forth with distinguished lustre. But whether the display be limited to one, or extended to more, such are the characters of the work as to proclaim a divine agent..

It might be shewed, that we have here an history of the *Wisdom* of God. This perfection is displayed in the work of creation. All things are declared to be “very good<sup>c</sup>,” as exactly corresponding to the pattern in the divine mind, and to the end for which they were made. We may therefore justly say; “O LORD, how manifold  
“are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them

D 4

“all.”

“all d.” The same wisdom is conspicuous in the works of Providence. How often hath God “brought to nought the counsel of the wicked ;” now, by “making their devices of none effect,” although the result of the most mature deliberation, and displaying all the craft of the old serpent ; then, by turning their very schemes of destruction on their own heads ! Pharaoh said, in the height of his resentment, and in the insolence of his pride ; “I will pursue, I will overtake, I “will divide the spoil ; my lust shall be satisfied “upon them ; I will draw my sword, my hand “shall destroy them e.” But this very pursuit was overruled for his more signal overthrow.

The wisdom of God might be illustrated from the consideration of the means employed for the preservation of the truth. The great longevity of the antediluvian patriarchs, and of some of those who lived after the flood, was evidently designed in subserviency to the preservation of that precious doctrine revealed to the Church, while it was only transmitted by tradition. A particular family was afterwards separated for this purpose. At length, when idolatry had overrun the world, revelation was committed to writing, and a whole nation were employed as its guardians. As the Sacred History exhibits the completion of great part of the prophecies contained in the volume of inspiration, we have another evidence that its author is “the only wise God,” who “knoweth the end from the beginning.”

Did

d Psal. civ. 24.

e Exod. xv. 9.

Did we particularly consider the history of redemption, we would at every step find reason to admire “the manifold wisdom of God ;” as displayed in the comprehensive nature of the first revelation of grace, which is a beautiful summary of all that hath since been communicated to the Church ; in its being expressed in a free promise ; in the seasonableness of this revelation ; in the choice of that divine Person, as the immediate Revealer, who was himself to bruise the head of the serpent ; in the institution of sacrifices, as a perpetual and sensible testimony of the way in which sin should actually be expiated ; in the salvation of the family of Noah by an ark, and by means of water, as figurative of the salvation of all who believe ; in the appointment of a typical priesthood and royalty, as well as in raising up prophets, who were at the same time messengers employed by the Angel of the covenant, and types of his future appearance in our world ; in the whole frame of the Mosaic dispensation, as a shadow of good things to come ; in the gradual increase of the light of revelation, as the more perfect day approached, when “the Sun of righteousness” should himself “arise with healing in his wings.”

How wonderful the display of divine wisdom, in the constitution of the mediatory person of Jesus ; in the formation of his body, of the same substance with ours, yet without sin ; in the choice of the time of his appearance, when “the world by wisdom knew not God ;” in the means employed



employed for the accomplishment of the prophecy as to his being born in Bethlehem, and for making it legally known that he was of the lineage of David ; in the excitement of a general expectation, among Gentiles as well as Jews, of the appearance of an illustrious and extraordinary person about this time ; in the choice of his forerunner, in respect of the tribe of which he sprung, his immediate parents, the place of his nativity and education, his manner of life, his peculiar ministry, his great acceptableness to the people, his eminent faithfulness and intrepidity, his want of personal acquaintance with the Messiah, and the occasion and circumstances of his testimony to him !

Here we might contemplate this perfection as displayed in the doctrine which Christ taught ; in the character of his miracles ; in the choice of the time and circumstances in which many of them were wrought, and in their peculiar significance as emblems of his spiritual work ; in the employment of so unlikely a mean as his own death, for destroying the power of sin, Satan and death ; in his being betrayed by one of his disciples, the natural consequence of which must have been, that had the traitor known any thing detrimental to the character of his Master, he would undoubtedly have published it for his own vindication ; in making the doctrine of the cross the instrument of subduing the world to the obedience of faith.—But the nature of this work will not admit of so particular a discussion.

We

We might also take an extensive view of Divine *Power*. For the sacred volume contains a striking and an ample history of this perfection. Its glory illuminates the records of creation. No language can be imagined, that could so forcibly express the infinite ease with which God effected this work, as that employed by the inspired historian. "God said, Let light be, and light was." He "spake, and it was done: he commanded, "and it stood fast." His providential government is one continued display of omnipotence. "Day "unto day uttereth speech."

The Sacred History, in a great variety of instances, illustrates the meaning of that name which God so frequently uses,—JEHOVAH SABAOth, or the LORD OF HOSTS,—a name which peculiarly expresses his almighty power and universal dominion. Some have supposed, that Sabaoth is one of the proper names of God. But it is evident, that as the word signifies *hosts* or *armies*, he is called the LORD, or God of hosts, because the various hosts of creatures are all the work of his hands, and obey his will. This is just an expression of his omnipotence. Hence we find, that the language of the seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy is "the LORD of hosts<sup>f</sup>," is applied to him by the four living creatures, with a change of expression denoting the meaning of the name; "Holy, holy, "holy LORD God Almighty<sup>g</sup>."

His

<sup>f</sup> Isa. vi. 3.

<sup>g</sup> Rev. iv. 8.

His is "the army of heaven." The different orders of holy *angels* are all his hosts, his "ministers that do his pleasure." He employs them as ministers both of providence and grace, and as instruments either of judgment, or of mercy. By an angel, the vain-glorious Herod is smitten <sup>h</sup>, and by an angel the faithful servant of Jesus is delivered <sup>i</sup>. Sometimes one of these heavenly messengers sweeps away embattled hosts with "the besom of destruction." Thus an angel smote, in the camp of the Assyrians, an hundred four-score and five thousand. At other times, an army of angels is employed as a guard to one man. When the king of Syria sought to make Elisha his prisoner, and sent to Dothan "horses, and chariots, and a great host," which compassed the city; "behold, the mountain," on which it was built, "was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha <sup>j</sup>." When the angels of God met Jacob on his way to his father's house, he said, "This is God's host <sup>m</sup>." "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation?"

He hath also legions of *devils* at his command, whom he employs, either for the trial of his saints, as in the experience of Job <sup>n</sup>; or for the punishment of his adversaries, as we learn from the account given of his judgments on the Egyptians; "He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath and indignation, and trouble, by sending  
"evil

h Acts xii. 23.

i Acts xii. 7. 11.

k 2 Kings xix. 35.

l 2 Kings vi. 15. 17.

m Gen. xxxii. 1, 2.

n Job i. 12.; ii. 6.

“evil angels among them<sup>o</sup>.” These hellish hosts acknowledged Jesus as their Lord ; confessing that he had power to torment them, or to send them whithersoever he pleased.

*Wicked men* must also be numbered among his hosts. For he “maketh the wrath of man to praise him ; the remainder of wrath shall he restrain.” Hence he calls Nebuchadnezzar his servant<sup>p</sup> : and all wicked men are his servants in the same sense : for he overrules their very wickedness for accomplishing his own purposes. “His servants they are to whom they obey :” and although disobedient to the precept, they, without any intention on their part, as well as without any constraint on his, fulfil the purpose. For accomplishing his designs of judgment, often he employs them against one another. Thus did he testify his displeasure with the Midianites<sup>q</sup>, and afterwards with the Philistines<sup>r</sup>, when they sought the destruction of his people. He “set every man’s sword against his fellow.” Often hath he employed them as his instruments in punishing a professing people for their iniquities. Sennacherib, notwithstanding all his boasting and stoutness of heart against the God of Israel, was only his sword. That God, whom he blasphemed, had sent him, although he knew it not, “against an hypocritical nation.” He was merely executing a commission, which he could not read ; and fulfilling all God’s counsel, although he viewed it

as

<sup>o</sup> Psal. lxxviii. 49.

<sup>p</sup> Jer. xxvii. 6.

<sup>q</sup> Judg. vii. 24.

<sup>r</sup> 1 Sam. xiv. 25.

as wholly his own<sup>s</sup>. Often also have the wicked been employed as instruments of deliverance to the Church. The kings of the Medes invaded Chaldea, with no other design than to gratify their ambition or revenge. But it was the purpose of the Most High to break in pieces the proud empire of Babylon, that his captives might be delivered. He therefore describes the plan, preparations, warlike operations and success, as proceeding wholly from himself: and, to express the absolute certainty of the event, although at the distance of some centuries, he employs such language as if he rather declared what was past, than foretold what was future. He appears as a sovereign leader, issuing forth his orders to his vassals, which they must necessarily execute; nay, as an invisible, but all-powerful agent, influencing all their counsels. “ Make bright the arrows; “ gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up “ the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his “ device is against Babylon, to destroy it; be- “ cause it is the vengeance of the LORD, the ven- “ geance of his temple.—The LORD of Hosts hath “ sworn by himself, saying, Surely I will fill thee “ with men as with caterpillars.—Set ye up a “ standard in the land, blow the trumpet among “ the nations, prepare the nations against her: “ call together against her the kingdoms of Ara- “ rat, Minni and Ashchenaz, appoint a captain “ against her, cause the horses to come up as the “ rough caterpillars. Prepare against her the na-  
“ tions

<sup>s</sup> Isa. x. 5.—7.



“ tions with the kings of the Medes, the captains  
 “ thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the  
 “ land of his dominion<sup>t</sup>.” Observe how he de-  
 scribes the cruel Medes and Persians, and the other  
 heathen nations whom he was pleased to employ  
 in this work :—“ I have commanded my sanctified  
 “ ones, I have also called my mighty ones for  
 “ mine anger, even them that rejoice in my high-  
 “ nefs. The noise of a multitude in the moun-  
 “ tain, like as of a great people : a tumultuous  
 “ noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered toge-  
 “ ther : the LORD of *hosts* mustereth the *hosts* of  
 “ the battle. They come from a far country,  
 “ even the LORD and the weapons of his indig-  
 “ nation to destroy the whole land<sup>u</sup>.”

His *own people* may justly be reckoned among  
 his hosts. The typical Israelites are denominated  
 “ the hosts of JEHOVAH<sup>w</sup>.” This name especially  
 respects the Church under the New Testament,  
 consisting of converts belonging to every kindred ;  
 and therefore called “ the goodly heritage of the  
 “ hosts of nations<sup>x</sup>.” The Church appears “ ter-  
 “ rible as an army with banners.” All her ge-  
 nuine members have been “ volunteers in the  
 “ day of his power.” They have enlisted under  
 his banner. He employs them in his wars. He  
 teaches their hands to war, and their fingers to  
 fight. He manages them in a different manner  
 from that in which he exercises his power over  
 the wicked. He works in them, not in opposition  
 to their own intentions, but according to the ha-  
 bitual

<sup>t</sup> Jer. li. 11. 14. 27. 28.

<sup>u</sup> Isa. xlii. 3.—5.

<sup>w</sup> Exod. xii. 41.

<sup>x</sup> Jer. iii. 19.

bitual inclinations of their hearts, as renewed by his grace. They obey his will on earth, in resemblance of the holy army above. Like the angels of bliss, they in their inferior degree are “his hosts, his ministers, that do his pleasure.” It is therefore their daily prayer; “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” They have “a leader and commander,” who conducts them to certain victory. They “overcome Satan, through the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony.” They also overcome the world. And, what is more than either; they are conquerors over themselves. Employing them as his hosts, he brings glory to his name by the warfare itself, and by its happy termination.

This character is in a peculiar sense conferred on his servants in the ministry. When the Levites were admitted into the service of God, they were said to “enter into the host,” and to “war the warfare.” Hence this very language is adopted by the apostle Paul, when addressing Timothy<sup>z</sup>: and the ministers of the New Testament, in declaring the glad-tidings of salvation, are described as a great host or army: “JEHOVAH gave the word: Great was the army of those that published it<sup>a</sup>.”

The same designation is given to the *heavenly bodies*. Hence are they so often called “the host of heaven<sup>b</sup>”; not merely as signifying their number, but their order, beauty, and constant obedience

y Num. iv. 3, 23.

z 1 Tim. i. 18.; 2 Tim. ii. 3, 4.

a Psal. lxxviii. 11.

b Deut. iv. 19.; Isa. xxxiv. 4.

dience to the divine command. It deserves our attention, that as not only the heathen worshipped the heavenly bodies, but the Israelites discovered a strong attachment to this species of idolatry, God, in revealing himself to his Church, often asserts his absolute dominion over this host, and also occasionally declares the foundation of this dominion. He announces himself as their Lord, because they are all the work of his hands: “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.—I, even my hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded <sup>b</sup>.” He hath made the “lights in the firmament of heaven,—for seasons <sup>c</sup>:” and as he is pleased to dispense their influences, he either blesses the inhabitants of the earth with abundance, or punishes them with want; he preserves them in health, or visits them with sickness. Hence he connects this name with a declaration of his dominion over the host of heaven, in relation to the earth: “Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of Hosts is his name <sup>d</sup>.” He hath at times given more astonishing displays of this dominion. “The sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people”

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“ple

<sup>b</sup> Isa. xl. 26.; xlv. 12.<sup>c</sup> Gen. i. 14.<sup>d</sup> Jer. xxxi. 35.

“ple had avenged themselves on their enemies :  
 “ —for JEHOVAH fought for Israel <sup>e</sup>.” Deborah,  
 it is probable, in her song of triumph, alludes to  
 some extraordinary circumstances not recorded in  
 the history of the defeat of Jabin’s host : “ They  
 “ fought from heaven ; the stars in their courses  
 “ fought against Sisera <sup>f</sup>.”

The *elements* are also his hosts. “ Fire and  
 “ hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind fulfil his  
 “ words.” He swept away an ungodly world  
 with a deluge of water. He destroyed the Philis-  
 tines with thunder <sup>h</sup> ; and sent fire from heaven  
 on the messengers of the king of Israel, who came  
 to take the prophet Elijah <sup>i</sup>. He made the earth  
 to open and swallow up the rebellious company  
 of Korah. When the haughty Pharaoh refused  
 to acknowledge and obey the God of heaven and  
 earth, he armed all the elements in his quarrel.  
 He “ sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along  
 “ upon the ground <sup>k</sup>.” He turned their water  
 into blood. That very river, on which Egypt  
 depends for the means of life, became an instru-  
 ment of death <sup>l</sup>. The earth rose in arms against its  
 guilty inhabitants. Every particle of dust was  
 furnished with a sting, and caused at once pain  
 and self-abhorrence <sup>m</sup>. The atmosphere became  
 too gross a medium for transmitting the light of  
 heaven <sup>n</sup>. That air, which formerly supported  
 life, was found to be merely a vehicle for the pes-  
 tilence.

e Josh. x. 13, 14. f Judg. v. 20. g Psa. cxlviii. 8. h 1 Sam. vii. 10.

i 2 Kings i. 12. k Exod. ix. 23. l Exod. vii. 19.—21. m Exod. viii.

16, 17.

n Exod. x. 21.—23.

tilence<sup>o</sup>. At length God “ did blow with his “ wind ;” and Pharaoh, with all his host, sunk as lead in the mighty waters.

All the *irrational* creatures are his hosts. “ Beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying “ fowl,—praise the name of the LORD.” To punish the idolatry of the mingled nations, which the king of Assyria settled in the land of Israel, “ JEHOVAH sent lions among them<sup>p</sup>.” Bears were the instruments of his vengeance on the children, who mocked his servant Elisha<sup>q</sup>. To the rebellious prophet, the belly of a great fish is provided, as at the same time a prison and a place of preservation. He punished the murmuring of the Israelites, by sending fiery serpents to destroy them<sup>r</sup>. At his command, such legions of frogs assaulted the Egyptians, that the combined power of Egypt was insufficient to vanquish them<sup>s</sup>. Often hath he poured contempt on the power and on the pride of man, by making the meanest or the minutest creatures the messengers of destruction. The *god* Herod is eaten by worms ; as if the true God would, by his end, remind him of the meanness of his origin, and of the contemptible impotence of that divinity ascribed to him by his minions<sup>t</sup>. When he would punish the oppressors of his people, “ he spake, and there came divers sorts “ of flies, and lice in all their coasts.—He spake, “ and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that “ without number ; and did eat up all the herbs

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“ in

<sup>o</sup> Exod. ix. 15. ; Psal. lxxviii. 50.

<sup>p</sup> 2 Kings xvii. 25.

<sup>q</sup> 2 Kings ii. 24.

<sup>r</sup> Numb. xxi. 6.

<sup>s</sup> Exod. viii. 5, 6.

<sup>t</sup> Acts xii. 21.—23.



“ in their land, and devoured the fruit of their “ ground u.” He dignifies these mean creatures, the locust, the canker-worm, the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, with the character of his “ great “ army ;” because, as he sends them for the punishment of a guilty people, they certainly execute his commission v. To convince the Israelites, how easy it was for him to give them the possession of the land of promise, he informs them that he had a very puny host that could easily accomplish the work : “ I will send hornets before “ thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee ;” and his promise was verified in their experience w. When we consider these things, justly may we say with Bildad ; “ Is there any number of his armies x ?”

Our God is still known as “ the LORD of hosts,” not only in his conduct towards his Church, but in her. The more sensible displays he hath formerly given of his power, may be viewed as emblems of his continued, but more spiritual, operation. As all true Israelites are “ the hosts “ of JEHOVAH,” he honours his servants with the name of *angels* v. Did the stars in their courses fight against Sisera ? He “ holdeth the seven “ stars in his right-hand,” and employs them in fighting against his enemies. Did he cause the sun to stand still on Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon ? In carrying on the work of redemption,

u Psal. cv. 31, 34, 35.

v Joel ii. 25.

w Exod. xxiii. 28. ;

Josh. xxiv. 12.

x Job xxv. 3.

y Rev. ii. 1. 8. &c.

redemption, and for accomplishing his purposes of mercy towards the Church, he hath often covered the *sun* with blackness, and converted the *moon* into blood. He hath made the greatest political luminaries to stand still, to alter their courses, or to hide their heads in darkness<sup>2</sup>. To express the honour put on the prophets, called his two witnesses, they are described as exercising a delegated power over the elements. “If any man will hurt them, *fire* proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies. These have power to shut *heaven*, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy; and have power over *waters* to turn them to blood, and to smite the *earth* with all plagues<sup>3</sup>.” Did God employ the weakest and vilest instruments in punishing the Egyptians and Canaanites? This fitly represents the wonderful display of his almighty power by means of the gospel, in choosing “the base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.”

This name affords comfort to the Church in the most trying and perilous times. This “name of the God of Jacob defends” her. “Although an host encamp” against her, in this she may be confident. He, who is with her, is mightier by far than all that can be against her. She may be encompassed, not by one host only, but by many. But they are the hosts of JEHOVAH, under his government and control, how malevolent soever their

their designs. We may therefore still sing ; “ The  
“ LORD of hosts is with us ; the God of Jacob is  
“ our refuge.”

It is a special ground of consolation, that this designation belongs to Jesus, the Saviour of the Church. That King, who appeared in vision to Esaias, was the LORD of hosts <sup>b</sup> ; and we know that it was the glory of Christ, which the prophet saw <sup>c</sup>. Jesus is often represented as the bridegroom and husband of the Church : but of this glorious Husband it is said, “ The LORD of hosts  
“ is his name <sup>d</sup>.” Christ is that King and “ Lord  
“ of glory,” who ascended in the midst of his angels. And “ who is this King of glory ? The  
“ LORD of hosts, he is the king of glory <sup>e</sup>.”

This character conveys a comfortable assurance of the Church’s triumph over all her incorrigible enemies. The Lord comforts his Church with the proclamation of this name, as her security for victory over ancient Babylon. “ Thus saith the  
“ LORD of hosts, The children of Israel, and the  
“ children of Judah, were oppressed together ;  
“ and all that took them captives held them fast ;  
“ they refused to let them go. Their Redeemer  
“ is strong ; The LORD of hosts is his name : he  
“ shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may  
“ give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabi-  
“ tants of Babylon <sup>f</sup>.” As that kingdom of graven images was a type of mystical Babylon, the fate of the one prefigured that of the other. Hence

we

<sup>b</sup> Isa. vi. 5.

<sup>c</sup> John xii. 41.

<sup>d</sup> Isa. liv. 5.

<sup>e</sup> James ii. 1. ; Psal. xxiv. 10.

<sup>f</sup> Jer. l. 33, 34.

we are directed to the same almighty power, as the ground of our confidence: "Strong is the LORD God who judgeth her g."

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#### SECTION IV.

*Of the Holiness of God.—Of his Justice, as manifested in the Threatening and Curse of the Law;—in the Antediluvian History;—in the Deluge;—in the Destruction of the Cities of the Plain;—in the Resemblance between Sin and Punishment;—in the Mosaic Economy;—in the sufferings of the Messiah.*

ACCORDING to the nature of this work, it is not necessary that we should nicely distinguish between the Holiness and Justice of God. As his holiness is the perfect rectitude of his nature, according to which he infinitely loves what is morally good, and hates what is evil; his justice, as it regards his creatures at least, is the actual display of this essential holiness. God hath manifested his holiness, indeed, in various respects, in which there was no call for the operation of his justice. A few of these may be mentioned.

He displayed his holiness in making all things very good. For the evil of sin was not the work

of God. His rational creatures were endowed with moral goodness. As revelation is meant for man, a very particular account is given of his original rectitude. He was created "after the image of God, in his likeness;" that is, "in righteousness and true holiness<sup>h</sup>."

To his rational creatures he also gave a perfect law. Man was subjected to a positive precept. But we are by no means to suppose that the law was confined to this. The moral law was written on his heart by the finger of God: and this, as to the substance of it, is the transcript of infinite holiness. In every respect, it is holy, just and good. It was so, even in its covenant-form. It is so, as a rule of life to believers. Although they are in no respect justified before God by their obedience to this law; yet, such is his holiness, that he requires that they should be "perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect," and still press forward toward this perfection.

That law of ceremonies which God gave his ancient people, contains a striking representation of his holiness. Whence did God enjoin so many washings and purifications? Had they, or could they have, any virtue in themselves? Often did he assure them of the contrary. But by the observation of these, according to the imperfect nature of the dispensation, he would still remind them of his infinite hatred of sin. Did the touch of a dead body communicate ceremonial defilement? Thus the Supreme Lawgiver taught, in the most lively



lively manner, the contaminating nature of all the actions of a natural man, and the necessity of being "purged from dead works, that we may serve the living God." Why were there so many persons, places and things, consecrated by him, as partaking of an external holiness? Can mere outward rites render a man well-pleasing to God? Can any place be in itself more sacred than another, to him who is LORD of the whole earth? Can irrational or inanimate creatures be the subjects of true holiness? Nothing of this kind was ever meant. But it was the will of God, by these shadows and sensible representations, daily to inculcate on a gross and obdurate people the necessity of purity of heart, of being really devoted to the LORD, of being holy in all manner of conversation.

In a great variety of instances, the holiness of God is practically demonstrated by the operations of his justice. 1. Deeply to *impress* the *mind* of man with the *majesty* of divine *justice*, seems to have been one special design of the Spirit of inspiration, especially in the writings of the Old Testament. This appears as the most prominent feature in the history given us of the covenant made with Adam. We have scarcely had time to contemplate and admire the goodness of God in the formation of man, and in the ample provision made for his sustenance and comfort; ere we are made to tremble at the appearance of a more awful perfection. A promise this covenant

nant undoubtedly contained ; but it lay hid in that terrific threatening, “ In the day thou eat—  
 “ est,—dying thou shalt die <sup>i</sup>.” How soon is the voice of blessing succeeded by that of the curse ! The one would almost seem to be uttered, only to give tenfold energy to the other. The effect of the blessing, pronounced on the earth, has barely appeared, ere we are aroused by that alarming denunciation, ever since verified in the experience of guilty man ; “ Curfed is the ground for thy  
 “ fake <sup>k</sup>.” When God had created “ an help  
 “ meet” for man, he *bleffed* them both, faying,  
 “ Be fruitful and *multiply*.” When he pays them another vifit, this very increafe, which originally flowed from the bleffing, is converted into a curfe ;  
 “ I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, and thy  
 “ conception <sup>l</sup>.” How quickly is the threatening changed into a fatal fentence actually pronounced ; “ Unto duft thou shalt return !” No fooner is it pronounced, than it is partly executed ; “ So  
 “ he drove out the man,” drove him out of that delightful garden, which had been created for his ufe, and in which he had been placed but a fhort time before.

We advance but a fingle ftep further in the history of mankind, when we are arrested by another difplay of divine juftice. The firft man, born of woman, receives from the Supreme Judge a folemn warning as to the neceffary connexion between fin and punifhment. To Cain he  
 faid,

i Gen. ii. 17.

k Chap. i. 24. ; iii. 17.

l Chap. i. 28. ; iii. 16.

said, "If thou dost not well, sin lieth at the door<sup>m</sup>," that is, it lieth like a beast of prey, ready to devour; certain punishment awaits thee. And no sooner had he transgressed, than his sin laid hold of him, in its necessary consequence. Formerly the earth was cursed for man's sake. But here the curse seems to expand, and to acquire an increase of force, with the increase of human guilt: "Now art thou cursed from the earth<sup>o</sup>." Man was driven out of paradise before. In this first-born of man, the curse is so forcibly exemplified, that he speaks of himself as an outcast from creation: "Behold thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth<sup>o</sup>." In this language, however, he only expresses the more remarkable execution of the curse, primarily executed on his parents. For he thus explains it; "From thy face shall I be hid, and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth."

The history of about sixteen hundred years is next condensed in a few lines. Here, although the life of man was at its greatest extent, the narrative is most abridged, as if the Spirit of inspiration would teach us, that the present life, even at its utmost stretch, is but a shadow; and that the longest period, when past, seems to the mind, equally with the shortest, as a tale that hath been told. We are hurried down the stream of time, through eight successive generations, and are allowed no pause, till we find ourselves encompassed with the waters of destruction. On this awful

<sup>m</sup> Gen. iv. 7.

<sup>n</sup> Chap. iii. 17.; iv. 11.

<sup>o</sup> Chap. iii. 24.; iv. 14.

ful display of justice, the sacred historian dwells much longer than on all the events which took place during sixteen centuries before ; as long as on the whole history of man after that of his creation. Such a display of divine justice was this, that in God's conduct towards *mere* man, there never was, and we are assured there never will be, any thing equal to it, while time endures. It therefore claims our particular attention.

That this event might incontestably appear the effect of punitive justice, full warning was given. It was preceded by a denunciation of the vengeance purposed ; while at the same time an opportunity was given for repentance, during the ministry of Noah, and the exercise of divine long-suffering, for an hundred and twenty years.

When this period was elapsed, God would no longer strive with man by his word and Spirit. He proceeded to strive with him in another way, by the threatened judgment. Then all nature conspired against the impenitent rebel. God "called to the heavens from above, and to the earth, " that he might judge his people," by executing vengeance, in a most signal manner, on their enemies, according to the threatening previously denounced.

The destruction was such as cannot be accounted for on natural principles. It was immediately the work of God. Every thing that takes place, in respect of supreme agency, proceeds from him. But he asserts his claim to this work as of an extraordinary

traordinary kind, “ I, even I do bring a flood of “ waters upon the earth <sup>p</sup>.” He claims it as his, considered as directly counteracting his former operation from the beginning of time. He represents it as such a deviation from his ordinary course, as shall have no parallel while “ earth remaineth <sup>q</sup>.”

So remarkable was this vengeance, that it extended to the earth itself, and to its guiltless inhabitants and productions. God testified his infinite displeasure at sin, by involving all those creatures in the punishment, that had in any respect been the instruments of human guilt, or the occasions of it ; that had ministered to man’s necessities, or to his unbridled appetites ; that, in a word, had been formerly subjected to his dominion. So complete was this destruction, that the whole frame of nature was unhinged. Sin had converted the earth into a moral chaos. “ The earth was filled with violence ; it was corrupt :” for “ all flesh had corrupted his way “ upon the earth.” The professors of the true religion were blended into one mass with the ungodly world. The Supreme Judge therefore acted in such a manner, as if he meant to reduce all things to their primæval chaos ; in the execution of that awful sentence, “ I will destroy “ them with the earth <sup>r</sup>.” He seems as if he “ were to undo the glorious work of creation. In that work, he had “ divided the waters, which “ were under the firmament, from the waters “ which

p Gen. vi. 17.

q Chap. viii. 22.

r Chap. vi. 12, 13.



“ which were above it .” Now he brings them together again. “ The fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened t.”

This destruction involved the professors of the true religion, as well as the profane ; the posterity of Seth, that other seed appointed by God instead of Abel, together with the descendants of the murdering and rebellious Cain. As the Holy Spirit ceased to strive even with “ the sons of God,” because they *also* were *flesh* u, under the dominion of carnality, and addicted to every wickedness ; the deserved vengeance reached them in common with others.

This judgment was as universal as it could well be, without the total destruction of the human race : and both the purpose and the promise of God prevented such an event. Only one small family was saved. The vengeance is most distinctly marked, as contrasted with the display at the same time given of remunerative justice. “ The LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark : for *thee* have I seen “ righteous before me in this generation v.” The wonderful preservation of this single family shewed in the clearest manner, that the destruction of all the world besides was not the effect of blind chance ; or the work of a supreme agent, who made no distinction between the righteous and the wicked. When I speak of remunerative justice, however, it is not meant that Noah merited this deliverance by any righteousness of his own. He

“ found

s Gen. i. 7.

t Chap. vii. 11

u Chap. vi. 3.

v Chap. vii. 1.

“found grace in the eyes of the LORD<sup>w</sup>,” as trusting in a better righteousness<sup>x</sup>: nay, he “found “grace,” by which he was enabled to make this his confidence. His salvation may be viewed as a reward. But it is no inconsiderable proof of its being a reward of grace, that it extended to his whole family, although we have too much evidence that one of them at least was a wicked person.

This punishment, dreadful as it was, seems to have been indispensably necessary. So low was the Church reduced before the deluge, that, according to human apprehension, she could not have existed for another generation. Had she not been “saved by water,” she must have been swept away by the flood of iniquity. Thus, the circumstances vindicate the judgment; and shew, that God could not have acted otherwise, mankind continuing in such a state, without virtually renouncing his claim to the moral government of the world.

Such a general impression did this judgment make on succeeding generations, that not only was divine justice, as manifested in this dispensation, celebrated by those who adhered to the true religion<sup>y</sup>; but even heathen nations retain some traditionary knowledge of it to this day.

In a word, this punishment took place, and is recorded, as a lively prelude of the future judgment. As the world, “being overflowed with “water perished, the heavens and the earth which  
“are

<sup>w</sup> Gen. vi. 8.

<sup>x</sup> Heb. xi. 7.

<sup>y</sup> Job xxii. 15, 16.

“are now,—are kept in store, reserved unto fire  
 “against the day of judgment, and perdition of  
 “ungodly men.” The one prefigured the other,  
 in the unexpectedness of the event <sup>a</sup>; in the final  
 separation made between the righteous and the  
 wicked <sup>b</sup>; in the immediate procuring causes of  
 the destruction, the abuse of divine longsuffering,  
 and the rejection of gospel-grace; in the com-  
 pleteness of the destruction; in the comparative  
 paucity of those who are saved <sup>c</sup>; and in the  
 means by which their salvation is accomplished <sup>d</sup>.

The sacred historian gives us a progressive ac-  
 count of the manifestation of divine justice, in  
 the confusion of tongues at Babel <sup>e</sup>; in the plagues  
 brought on Pharaoh and Abimelech, because of  
 their conduct towards the wife of Abraham <sup>f</sup>; in  
 the destruction of the cities of the plain <sup>g</sup>; in the  
 punishment of Esau for his profanity <sup>h</sup>; in the  
 remuneration of Jacob at the expence of the un-  
 righteous Laban <sup>i</sup>; and in the judgments execu-  
 ted on the Egyptians because of their cruelty to  
 the Israelites. But on these things we cannot en-  
 large.

Only, with respect to the destruction of the  
 cities of the plain, the following things may be  
 observed, for illustrating the display given of di-  
 vine justice in this event. Their sin is said to  
 have a *cry*,—a “cry waxen great before the  
 “face of the LORD <sup>k</sup>.” This is the very meta-  
 phor

z 2 Pet. iii. 5.—7.

c Luke xviii. 8.

f Gen. xii. 17.; xx. 18.

Heb. xii. 16, 17.

a Mat. xxiv. 37.—39.

d 1 Pet. iii. 21.

g Gen. xix. 24.

i Gen. xxxi. 42.

b Mat. xxiv. 40.

e Gen. xi. 1.—9.

h Gen. xxvii. 37.;

k Gen. xviii. 20.; xix. 13.

phor used by God in addressing Cain ; “ The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me <sup>l</sup>. ” This language is by no means exclusively appropriated to the horrid crime of murder. It is applicable to every sin, as expressive of the necessary connexion between sin and punishment. For every sin hath a voice of crimination against the sinner. Lust first cries to the sinner for gratification ; and when it “ bringeth forth sin,” this immediately cries to God for vengeance. Its voice may not be heard by the transgressor himself, because his conscience may be seared ; but it is still heard by the Supreme Judge.

Descent is here, in an improper sense, ascribed to God : “ I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me <sup>m</sup>. ” There can be no change of place with him who is every where present ; nor can examination be necessary to the eye of omniscience. But God on this occasion appeared on earth, and represents himself as employing those means of investigation which are necessary to man ; to declare that all the acts of his vengeance are in perfect conformity to justice, that he never punishes without a sufficient reason.

The account of his previous discourse with Abraham, while it beautifully illustrates his wonderful condescension, at the same time teaches us, that, whatever be the objections of carnal men to the equity of his judgments, they will be approved by all who know divine holiness. Abraham was a mer-

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ciful

<sup>l</sup> Gen. iv. 10.<sup>m</sup> Gen. xviii. 21.

ciful man, and this part of his character eminently appears in his conduct on this occasion: but he could carry his intercession, in behalf of Sodom, no farther than this, that if there were ten righteous persons there, it might be spared for their sake. The holy angels, who sojourned with Lot, testified no reluctance to the fulfilment of their commission, although it was to issue in the utter destruction of these cities <sup>n</sup>.

That the justice of God might be set in the clearest light, the inhabitants of Sodom were permitted to manifest their greediness, obduracy, and violence, in working uncleanness, at the very time that the heavenly visitors came to their city. No regard to the laws of hospitality or of decency, no expostulations or reproofs, could restrain them. Parents do not conceal their wickedness from their children; but seem determined to train them up in their own abominable courses. All the men of the city, "both old and young," beset the house of Lot <sup>o</sup>. To these abandoned wretches, even the holy angels of God are objects of temptation, and seem a lawful prey. How could "their judgment linger," or "their damnation slumber?"

The circumstances of this destruction were most awful. The punishment reserved for all the wicked was anticipated. Hell was kindled on earth, and for this end rained from heaven on these atrocious sinners. Their destruction comes from that quarter, to which alone they could look for mercy. The windows of heaven are opened a  
second

<sup>n</sup> Gen. xviii. 33.; xix. 13.

<sup>o</sup> Gen. xix. 4.



second time, and pour out, not a flood of water, but of fire.

God appears more immediately in this judgment, than in the deluge itself. In accomplishing it, one divine Person evidently co-operates with another. “The LORD rained upon Sodom, and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven <sup>p</sup>.” It greatly heightens this display of indignation, when we find that he, who afterwards came to save, on this occasion appeared on earth, and in the likeness of our nature, as the destroyer.

The destruction, by means of the deluge, was gradual. But this was sudden and instantaneous. Sodom was “overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her.” This circumstance shews the fierceness of divine indignation; and is a lively figure of that sudden destruction which shall come on all the ungodly, when that same LORD, who came down to visit Sodom, shall be “revealed from heaven in flaming fire <sup>r</sup>.”

So urgent are the claims of justice, that even Lot seems in danger. While he lingered, the angels laid hold of his hand, and brought him forth, and set him without the city. JEHOVAH himself said to him, “Escape for thy life;—escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.” For, in public visitations for sin, even “the righteous scarcely are saved <sup>s</sup>.” Lot had no proper call to take up his residence among these wicked men; and

F 2

his

p Gen. xix. 24.

q Lam. iv. 6.

r 2 Pet. ii. 6.—9.

s 1 Pet. iv. 18.

his deliverance is represented as wholly the fruit of mercy <sup>t</sup>.

This destruction, in fine, was meant as a striking figure of the *eternal* punishment of the wicked. Hence it is said, that these cities “are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” As the manner in which they were punished prefigured the fire of hell; the perpetuity of their destruction is meant as a permanent emblem of everlasting destruction, in “the lake that burneth for ever and ever.” These cities “suffer the vengeance of eternal fire.” For it is the will of God that they should never be rebuilt: and not only is the place where they once stood, covered with the Dead Sea, and to the highest degree salt, although in an inland situation, whence it is also called the Salt Sea; but, as it still manifests the effects of burning in the extreme barrenness of the adjacent country, this burning is in some sense continued, in consequence of the sulphur, salt, and *asphaltus* or bitumen abounding in the sea, or incorporated with the soil. Hence, a country lying under the most awful effects of divine vengeance is thus described: “The whole land is brimstone and salt, and burning; that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth thereon; like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath <sup>v</sup>.”

## II. The

<sup>t</sup> Gen. xix. 16. 19.

<sup>u</sup> Jude 7.

<sup>v</sup> Deut. xxix. 22.—24.

See Wells's Geography Old Test. vol. i. p. 290.—297. New Test. vol. iv. p. 81.

II. The justice of God has been often displayed, in the most striking light, in the remarkable *resemblance* between the *sin* and the *punishment*. In the old world, iniquity had come in like a flood; and God swept away the transgressors by a flood of waters. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah burnt with the fire of unnatural lust; and God destroyed them by preternatural fire. Pharaoh would not let Israel go, although God's son, his first-born; therefore he slew the first-born of Pharaoh, and of all Egypt <sup>w</sup>. This cruel despot commanded, that all the male children of the Israelites should be drowned <sup>x</sup>; and in this very manner God destroyed him and all the strength of his kingdom. Nadab and Abihu "offered strange fire before the LORD; and there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them <sup>y</sup>." Adonibezek, although a heathen, was obliged to acknowledge the strictness of divine retribution, when his thumbs and great toes were cut off: "Threescore and ten kings," said he, "having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me <sup>z</sup>." Samson did not make a covenant with his eyes, so that they proved his snare: and he was chastised by having them put out <sup>a</sup>. As the sword of Agag, king of Amalek, "made women childless," so was his mother made "childless among women <sup>b</sup>." Absalom's vanity as to his person seems to have been

F 3

the

<sup>w</sup> Exod. iv. 22, 23.<sup>x</sup> Exod. i. 22.<sup>y</sup> Lev. x. 1.<sup>z</sup> Judg. i. 6, 7.<sup>a</sup> Judg. xiv. 2.; xvi. 4.<sup>b</sup> 1 Sam. xv. 33.

the source of his rebellion, and of his ruin <sup>c</sup>. This vanity was especially discovered about the hair of his head ; and by this, as would seem, he was entangled in the oak, where he met his merited fate <sup>d</sup>.

Many other instances of the same kind might be mentioned. But I hasten to observe,

III. That the *Mosaic economy* seems to have been especially designed to give the Church the deepest impressions of the *punitive justice* of God ; and to prepare her, by awful displays of severity, for receiving the doctrine of atonement by the sufferings of a divine Person. It had this effect partially on the Church of Israel. For the law generated a spirit of fear, which was occasionally discovered even by wicked men. The faith of genuine believers, however faintly, discerned the necessity of a better satisfaction than could be made by the blood of bulls or goats. But this instruction was especially meant for the New-Testament Church. Even to the prophets " it was " revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us " they did minister the things that are now reported <sup>e</sup>."

The law could not annul the covenant made with Abraham. It was added in subserviency to this. It was " a shadow of good things to come." But in itself considered, and as it affected the great body of that people to whom it was given, it was the ministration of death, and of condemnation <sup>f</sup>.

I. IF

<sup>c</sup> 2 Sam. xiv. 25. ; xv. 6.

<sup>d</sup> 2 Sam. xiv. 26. ; xviii. 9.

<sup>e</sup> 1 Pet. i. 11, 12.

<sup>f</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 7.



1. If we consider the *matter* of the revelation made from Mount Sinai, it will appear that divine justice was eminently brought into view. There was no renovation of the covenant of works made with Adam; for the Church was under that better covenant revealed to Abraham. But there was an exhibition of the law in its covenant form, that by it might be “the knowledge of “sin<sup>g</sup>.” It was revealed in all the strictness of its precept, and severity of its threatening. According to the tenor of the Mosaic dispensation, and particularly of the ceremonial law, the Israelites were still in danger of contracting defilement, and of being set apart as unclean; and, in various cases, of being excluded from the camp; as a prelude of the eternal excommunication of all sinners from the favour and fellowship of God, and of his saints. By their frequent purifications, and by the offerings they had to present, in consequence of defilement, in many cases unavoidably contracted; as well as by the daily sacrifices, morning and evening, and their greater solemnities of this kind; there was a constant “remembrance of sins<sup>h</sup>,” and therefore of their liability to the stroke of justice. It was the will of the Supreme Lawgiver, that this should be the case, and the dispensation was framed to answer this design; that sin might be restrained among a rebellious people. By the multiplied penalties with which the law was fenced, death continually stared them in the face; so that we need not

F 4

wonder,

g Rom. iii. 20.

h Heb. x. 3.



wonder, that through fear of it they should be  
 “all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

It is no inconsiderable proof of the severity of this dispensation, that, notwithstanding the multitude of sacrifices appointed for different transgressions, there were some for which no atonement was admitted. This was the case in general as to presumptuous sins. If a man sinned from ignorance, atonement might be made. “But the  
 “soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether  
 “he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same  
 “reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be  
 “cut off from among his people. Because he hath  
 “despised the word of the LORD, and broken his  
 “commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut  
 “off; his iniquity shall be upon him<sup>i</sup>.” In this sense it is said, that “every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward<sup>j</sup> ;” because every stubborn disobedience, as the expression signifies, was severely punished, either immediately by the hand of God, or if there were witnesses, by the hand of man<sup>k</sup>. The law itself knew no mercy, and admitted of no mitigation of its sentence; although the Lawgiver might grant a dispensation, as he did in the case of David, who ought to have suffered death for the crimes of adultery and murder<sup>l</sup>. “He that  
 “sinned against Moses’ law, died without mercy<sup>n</sup>.” It was fit that this should be the case, that the law, under which the Israelites were,  
 might

i Num. xv. 30, 31.

k Heb. ii. 2.

l Deut. xvii. 6.

m 2 Sam. xii. 13.

n Heb. x. 28.

might give a just representation of the unforgiving character of the law as a broken covenant; and of the impossibility of escaping, unless in the way of being saved from its curse.

2. Let us now attend to the *manner* in which this law was revealed. This was such, as to be evidently meant to fill the Israelites with fear of the holiness and justice of the Lawgiver; and to teach them the impossibility of having any comfortable intercourse with him, but through a Mediator. All those circumstances are here combined, that had the most direct tendency to produce these effects. Well may it be called “a fiery law.” For as it expressed the fire of his holy indignation against sin, God actually spoke the words of this law “out of the midst of the fire.” The very manner of its promulgation testified that “our God is a consuming fire.”

The Apostle, when addressing the believing Hebrews with respect to their distinguished privileges under the new dispensation, particularly enumerates most of the alarming circumstances which attended the promulgation of the law. “Ye are  
 “ not come to the mount that might be touched,  
 “ and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness,  
 “ and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a  
 “ trumpet, and the voice of words, which *voice*  
 “ they that heard, entreated that the word should  
 “ not be spoken to them any more. For they  
 “ could not endure that which was command-  
 “ ed. And if so much as a beast touch the moun-  
 “ tain,

“ tain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a  
 “ dart. And so terrible was the sight, that Mo-  
 “ ses said, I exceedingly fear and quake <sup>q</sup>.” He  
 enumerates these circumstances, to impress the  
 reader with the deepest sense of the severity of  
 the law ; and also to declare the manner in which  
 God operates on the minds of men by means of  
 it <sup>r</sup>.

God brought his people to the foot of an high  
 mountain, from the top of which he spoke to  
 them. For even when he speaks to men in the  
 voice of the law, he keeps them at an awful dis-  
 tance, as expressive of his “ terrible majesty.”  
 This mountain was absolutely barren, and situa-  
 ted in the midst of a desert, destitute of all the  
 means of life ; and without inhabitants, no one  
 being present but God and the people of Israel.  
 This is the first thing that God effects by means  
 of the law. He brings the sinner to a sense of  
 his guilt, of his desolate and destitute situation,  
 as wandering in the wilderness, and shut up there ;  
 so that there is no way of escape, no relief from  
 any quarter, none that can interpose between him  
 and the living God.

They came to a mountain “ that burned with  
 “ fire ;” or, as the words may be read, “ to the  
 “ burning fire.” The mountain “ burnt with fire  
 “ unto the midst of heaven <sup>s</sup>.” This denoted the  
 fire of God’s jealousy, or his holy indignation  
 against sin. Therefore it was said to Israel ; “ The  
 “ LORD

<sup>q</sup> Heb. xii. 18.—21.

<sup>r</sup> See Owen on the passage.

<sup>s</sup> Deut. iv. 11.

“ LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God <sup>t</sup>.” The Church explains the meaning of the symbol, when she makes this inquiry ; “ Wilt thou be angry for ever ? shall thy jealousy burn like fire <sup>u</sup> ? ” This proclaimed his holiness and justice, as displayed in the punishment of sin. “ A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about <sup>v</sup>.” As God, in a work of conviction, discovers to sinners their guilt, he shews them that they are exposed to the great and consuming fire of his justice.

“ Blackness and darkness ” are also mentioned among the awful circumstances attending this revelation. Although the fire burnt with the greatest violence, the light arising from it was overpowered by a mixture of blackness or thick clouds ; which must have rendered its appearance truly horrible. The light itself was as darkness ; and emphatically taught, that a sinner convinced of his guilt, and alarmed by a discovery of the fire of divine justice, can discern no ray of consolation there. He sees nothing but “ blackness “ and darkness,” the gloomy prelude of “ the “ blackness of darkness for ever ; ” as to all that the law, considered as a covenant, can make known.

The blackness and darkness were accompanied with “ tempest ; ” as in nature they are generally its forerunners. In this term the apostle seems to include the thunder, and lightening, and earthquake.

<sup>t</sup> Deut. iv. 24.

<sup>u</sup> Psal. lxxix. 5.

<sup>x</sup> Psal. xcvi. 3.

quake<sup>w</sup>. This was a lively emblem of that storm of wrath which shall “ sweep away the refuge “ of lies ;” and also exhibits the progress of the Spirit’s operation, when acting as a Spirit of conviction. By means of this law, he raises a storm in the conscience ; for “ the law worketh “ wrath<sup>x</sup>.”

They also heard “ the sound of a trumpet.” This was “ exceeding loud.” It “ founded long, “ and waxed louder and louder<sup>y</sup>.” This proclaimed the majesty of God as the Lawgiver and Judge of Israel. By means of it, they received a solemn summons to appear before him ; and to listen to the precepts and penalties of his law. In like manner, when the law is powerfully brought into the sinner’s conscience, it hath to him “ the “ sound of a trumpet.” Convinced that he is a criminal, and worthy of eternal death ; he hears it as his summons to appear before the tribunal of justice ; as a presage of that “ trump of God,” by which he shall be summoned to his bar at the day of judgment. While under the power of the law, he can expect nothing but a sentence of eternal condemnation. When he hears this trumpet, it is to him “ the alarm of war.” “ Shall the “ trumpet be blown, and the people not be afraid ?” The longer it is blown, it is still the louder. The sinner, if conscience be not lulled asleep, instead of discovering any ground of hope from the law, the longer he considers it, the more he

<sup>w</sup> Exod. xix. 16. 18.

<sup>x</sup> Rom. iv. 15.

<sup>y</sup> Exod. xix. 16. 19.



he sees his danger ; and is ready to be plunged into despair.

They heard “ the voice of words, which voice “ they that heard, entreated that the word should “ not be spoken to them any more.” This was the voice of God himself, pronouncing the *words* of the ten commandments, in the hearing of all Israel. This is called “ a great voice <sup>z</sup>,” and must have been very awful ; for it “ shook the earth <sup>a</sup>.” The elders came near to Moses, and said in the name of the people ; “ If we hear the voice of “ the LORD our God any more, then we shall “ die <sup>b</sup>.” This fitly represented the killing power of the law, when brought home to the conscience by the Spirit of conviction. Such was the experience of Paul : “ When the commandment came, “ —I died <sup>c</sup>.”

“ They could not endure that which was commanded.” These words, according to the view of some interpreters, respect the whole law. But there is undoubtedly a special connexion stated with the injunction immediately following,— “ And if so much as a beast touch the mount, it “ shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart.” This respected man as well as beast. But the apostle particularly mentions it in reference to the latter ; because it contained the greatest display of divine severity, and was that which especially affected the minds of the Israelites. Nor can we well imagine a more striking discovery of this severity, than that even an innocent beast must

<sup>z</sup> Deut. v. 22.

<sup>a</sup> Heb. xii. 26.

<sup>b</sup> Deut. v. 27.

<sup>c</sup> Rom. vii. 9.

must be treated as if morally guilty, if it accidentally trespassed within the bounds set round the mountain. Nor was this all. It was to be viewed as accursed ; and therefore to be stoned or shot, that no man might be defiled by touching it<sup>d</sup>. The strictness of the precept had the same effect on the Israelites, that it has had ever since. For it has an irritating power on the lusts of men. From the very restraints that a holy and just God imposes on these, sin appears more desirable. Hence the apostle testifies ; “ Sin, taking occasion “ by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence<sup>e</sup>.”

Both what was seen and heard was so terrible, that even Moses said, “ I do exceedingly tremble “ and quake.” When this revelation was so overwhelming to Moses, who had formerly heard the voice of God from the burning bush, and was so eminently distinguished by his holiness ; how could it be but dreadful to the guilty Israelites, who, destitute of faith in God, could view him only as an enemy ?

3. Let us, in the last place, attend to the *punishments* actually inflicted, according to the tenor of this law.

These were often *sudden*. Punishment followed hard after sin, to shew the necessary connexion between the one and the other. This was especially the case, when the punishment was inflicted by the hand of God. When the Israelites lusted for flesh, God gave them their own desire. “ But while  
“ their

<sup>d</sup> Exod. xix. 13.

Rom. vii. 5.

“their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them <sup>f</sup>.” When they murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, “Ye have killed the people of the LORD,” he threatened to “consume them as in a moment;” and although Aaron instantly took a censer with incense, to make atonement, and “ran into the midst of the congregation,” fourteen thousand and seven hundred had already perished <sup>g</sup>.

These punishments were very *awful*. In both the instances just now referred to, God destroyed the people by a plague. On different occasions, fire was the instrument he employed; a fit instrument indeed, under the administration of that “fiery law.” What could be more alarming to the whole congregation, than that two brothers, whom they had seen but a little before solemnly consecrated to the office of the priesthood, the nephews of Moses, the eldest sons of the high-priest, should be consumed by fire from JEHOVAH? The earthquake, at the giving of the law, would almost seem to express the nature of its judgments. For, afterwards, the earth opened its mouth, and swallowed up the rebellious company of Korah.

The punishments, which according to the law were inflicted by the hand of man, were in various instances attended with peculiar *solemnity*. In the case of blasphemy, all who heard it were to lay their hands on the head of the criminal <sup>h</sup>. This denoted their solemn attestation of the truth

<sup>f</sup> Psal. lxxviii. 29.—31.

<sup>g</sup> Num. xvi. 41.—49.

<sup>h</sup> Lev. xxiv. 16.

of the charge brought against him. But it implied more. Those, who laid their hands on his head, devolved the guilt, that, in consequence of his crime, might attach to them or to the nation at large, wholly on himself; demanded the execution of the sentence appointed by God, that this iniquity might not be visited on the congregation of Israel; left the blood of the criminal on his own head, and solemnly acknowledged the justice of the punishment. This rite is evidently of the same meaning with that appointed for every man who presented an offering for his sins. As transferring his guilt to the victim, he was to lay his hands on its head <sup>i</sup>. Thus was the high-priest to do on the great day of atonement <sup>k</sup>. This ordinance, then, with respect to a criminal, directly tended to impress the Israelites with a sense, both of the condemning, and of the defiling nature of sin; and taught them that its influence was so great, that even the sin of an individual would contaminate a whole society, unless it was expiated according to the laws given by the Supreme Judge.

The same thing appears from another institution. The criminal adjudged to death was to suffer *without the camp*. As it denoted the exclusion of all the finally impenitent from the presence of God, it intimated that the very blood of such a person carried defilement.

In many cases, the *whole* people were to take an active hand in the execution of the sentence.

All

<sup>i</sup> Lev. iv. 24. 29.

<sup>k</sup> Chap. xvi. 21.

All the congregation were to stone the sabbath-breaker <sup>l</sup>. The hands of all the people were also to be on him who should entice to idolatry <sup>m</sup>. Thus were they all solemnly to approve of the punishment ; and virtually to be witnesses against themselves, if they should ever be guilty of the crime.

The severe temporal punishments of the law extended to *saints*, equally with others. Miriam, the prophetess <sup>n</sup>, was smitten with leprosy, because she murmured against Moses <sup>o</sup>. Neither was Moses “ the man of God,” nor Aaron, “ the holy one of JEHOVAH,” permitted to bring the Israelites into Canaan ; because they rebelled at the water of Meribah, in smiting the rock, when God had commanded that they should speak to it ; and in charging Israel, in their unhallowed wrath, with that very crime of which they were themselves at this time guilty <sup>p</sup>. Uzzah, long afterwards, from misguided piety, laid his hand on the ark of God, when the oxen in the cart, on which it was borne, shook it by their unsteady motion. But “ the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah, and “ God smote him there for his error, and there he “ died by the ark of God <sup>q</sup>.” What a damp must this have brought on the hearts of the Israelites, in the midst of their joy on account of the return of the ark ! Even the man after God’s own heart was displeased. But as Uzzah was not a priest, and therefore transgressed the law when he touch-

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<sup>l</sup> 1 Num. xv. 35.<sup>m</sup> Deut. xiii. 9.<sup>n</sup> Exod. xv. 20.<sup>o</sup> Num. xii. 1.—10.<sup>p</sup> Chap. xx. 10.—12. 24.<sup>q</sup> 2 Sam. vi. 7.



ed the ark<sup>r</sup>; God in this affecting manner manifested his jealousy, and taught his people that he would be sanctified in all that drew nigh him. Thus also he reprov'd David and the Israelites, for suffering the ark to be drawn on a cart by beasts, when it should have been carried on slaves by the Levites. The sons of Kohath themselves, though set apart for bearing the sanctuary and all the consecrated vessels, might not *touch* any holy thing, under pain of death<sup>s</sup>. Even when God forgave his people, in as far as their sins merited eternal wrath, he “took vengeance on their inventions,” by temporal judgments extending to death itself<sup>t</sup>.

The destruction of this rebellious people was almost *universal*. All those, who came out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, except two persons, perished in the wilderness. For “the LORD’s anger was kindled in the wilderness, “until all the generation that had done evil in “the sight of the LORD was consumed<sup>u</sup>.

For the sin of *one*, God punished the *whole* congregation of Israel. Achan took some of the goods of Jericho; although the city, with all that was in it, had been devoted of God. The crime was charged against the Israelites in general, and they were punished on this account. “The “children of Israel committed a trespass in the “accursed thing.—Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies,—be-  
“cause

r Num. xvii. 3, 4.

s Chap. iv. 15.

t Psal. xcix. 8.

u Num. xxxi. 10.—13.

“cause they were accursed.” They fled before the men of Ai; and God declared that he would “not be with them any more,” except they destroyed the accursed person from among them<sup>v</sup>. Some of them perhaps knew, but did not reveal, the crime of Achan. God, at any rate, would display his justice in bringing sin to light; and by the tokens of his displeasure at the whole camp, would teach them to fear sin, as that alone which exposed them to danger; to be diligent in searching it out; and to be careful that others, as well as themselves, were obedient to his commandments. Thus he figuratively testified the intimate union among the members of a church; and the necessity, not only of purging out error and corruption, when discovered, but of exercising a holy jealousy, lest it should be working in secret, because “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” Were the Israelites accursed because of Achan? And can any church expect God’s blessing, if she is not careful to “take away the accursed thing?” Would an angel of God be accursed, did he preach another gospel, than that which Christ hath given<sup>w</sup>; and can a church escape the curse, if she receive it, or “bear them which are evil<sup>x</sup>?”

In a word, God often displayed the terror of his justice, by involving, in the destruction brought on the transgressor, *every thing* that pertained to him. When he would testify his indignation against those who engaged in the rebellion of Ko-

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rah,

<sup>v</sup> Josh. vii. 1. 4. 12.<sup>w</sup> Gal. i. 8.<sup>x</sup> Rev. ii. 2.

rah, “ the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained to Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them.” In the case of Achan, by the express commandment of JEHOVAH, judgment was to be executed by the hand of man, in all this extent. God had said, “ It shall be, that he that is taken with the accursed thing, shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath.”—And such was the punishment inflicted. “ Joshua and all Israel took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and all that he had : —and all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire<sup>z</sup>.” We intend afterwards to consider the visitation of the guilt of fathers on their children ; and therefore shall not enter on it here. But it deserves our particular regard, that the destruction extended even to things irrational and inanimate. The tents, and all the substance that was in the possession of these sinners, perished with them<sup>a</sup>. These could not possibly be the subjects of moral guilt or pollution. But as, in this punishment, “ they became a sign<sup>b</sup>,” an ensample not to the Israelites only, but to the Church in every age, expressive of the holiness and jealousy of God ; their very substance

y Num. xvi. 32, 33.

z Josh. vii. 15, 24, 25.

a Deut. xi. 6.

b Num. xxvi. 10.

stance is treated as accursed, that we might hence perceive the contaminating nature of sin, and its contagious influence, as subjecting even innocent creatures to the effects of the curse. This punishment also declares the rigorous claims of divine holiness and justice ; which demand the utter extinction of sin itself, and of every thing that may be a memorial of it.

We have already observed, that the Mosaic economy was designed to prepare the Church for receiving the doctrine of atonement by the sufferings of a divine Person. Such was its effect on the Israelites, obdurate as they were, that they virtually acknowledged, that sinful man can have no comfortable intercourse with the holy and just God, but through a *Mediator*. This appears from the very manner in which God spake the words of the law at first ; for the Second Person, as the Mediator and Angel of the covenant, spake from Mount Sinai. But this the Israelites understood not. When, therefore, they witnessed the terrors of this law, they said to Moses, as with one voice, “ Speak thou with us, and we will hear ; but let “ not God speak with us, lest we die <sup>c</sup>.” God assented to this proposal, as it was his will to teach them the necessity of it <sup>d</sup> ; and to shew them that his law was “ given in the hand of a mediator.” Moses describes the character of the great Prophet as corresponding with his in this very respect <sup>e</sup>.

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iv. Notwith-

c Exod. xx. 19.

d Deut. v. 24.

e Chap. xviii. 15.—18.

iv. Notwithstanding the terrors of this law, and the severe punishments inflicted under it, the most striking display that ever hath been, or possibly can be, given of the holiness and justice of God, is in the *sufferings* of our *Redeemer*. Here we are first to attend to the spotless innocence of the sufferer. “No guile was found in his lips.” There was no stain of sin in his heart. From his conception to his death, he was “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” “Yet it pleased JEHOVAH to bruise him; he hath put him to grief.” He, “who knew no sin, was made sin for us,” made a sin-offering, and treated as if he had been the most atrocious sinner that ever appeared on earth.

Nor are we to view him merely as an innocent man, but as “the Holy One of God.” He is “the man, the fellow of JEHOVAH of hosts;” who, as to his divine nature, was infinitely remote from suffering, as well as infinitely above the law, with respect to both its precept and its curse. Yet the Father, sustaining the character of Judge, gave forth this command; “Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, against the man that is my fellow; smite the Shepherd.” If the punishment of one perfectly innocent, as bearing the iniquities of others by imputation, exhibits, in a striking point of view, the evil and demerit of sin, the holiness and justice of God, and the indispensable necessity of a real atonement; how much more fully does this appear when

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we view sin as punished in the adorable Person of the Son of God ! What an affecting thought, that it was “ the Prince of life,” who was killed ; “ the just One,” who “ suffered for the unjust ;” “ the Lord of glory,” who was crucified !

We are further to consider the *severity* of these sufferings. As “ God spared not his own Son, “ but gave him up to the death,” so he spared him not as to the measure of his sufferings. The human nature was inseparably united to the divine, in one person ; yet so overwhelming was his agony, that he cried out ; “ My soul is exceeding “ sorrowful, even unto death ;” his strength was dried up as a potsherd ; and his heart was melted like wax. Although he received uninterrupted supplies from the Holy Spirit, without measure ; yet so unspeakable was his sense of wrath, and so hot was the indignation of God as a judge, that his holy human soul shrunk back with horror from the cup given him to drink. He had been attested from heaven as God’s beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased ; yet the Father hid his face, and left the glorious Sufferer under such darkness of soul, as was but faintly figured by the preternatural darkness that covered the earth. “ The pangs of hell took hold on him.” His soul was made an offering for sin. He sustained infinite wrath without any abatement. If these things were done “ in a green tree, what “ shall be done in the dry ?”

From the preceding considerations it is evident, that there is a necessary and inseparable *connexion* between *sin* and *punishment*. As this is established by the supreme Lawgiver, it flows from his nature as God. For he cannot “ behold iniquity.” He necessarily seeks its destruction, with all the energy of his infinite nature. Every sin is an appeal, both to his justice, and to his power : and however the sinner may flatter himself, this is the language in which God addresses him ; “ Be sure your sin will find you out <sup>g</sup>.” Sin acts as an informer against itself. As it brings this information in man’s own conscience, it as certainly does so at the bar of justice. Nay, in relation to the necessary exercise of justice, sin is here, by a strong figure, represented as a messenger that pursues the sinner till it overtake him.

We perceive also, that the *law* affords *no comfort* to the sinner. It was never revealed with this design. For “ what things soever the law faith, it faith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God <sup>h</sup>.” We can neither obey its precept, nor bear its curse. What folly then is it, for man to think of being justified by a law that utters no sentence, save that of eternal condemnation !

We learn the *necessity* of a complete *atonement* for sin. This is the great doctrine taught by the law, as it was revealed from Mount Sinai. It was meant as a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ.

<sup>g</sup> Numb. xxxii. 23.

<sup>h</sup> Rom. iii. 19.

Christ. It treated the Israelites with all severity. It applied the rod of its threatening and curse; that they might see the necessity of fleeing from it, to Him who was revealed, although more obscurely, as the end "of the law for righteousness." By the multitude of its sacrifices, as it could never be reasonably believed that God would accept of the blood of a beast as an atonement for the sin of man, it both declared the necessity of a complete satisfaction, and directed them to look for one of this character in the sufferings of the promised Messiah. By the constant repetition of such sacrifices, their insufficiency was taught, and the necessity of one that should for ever take away sin.

The Church is now delivered from the ceremonial law. But the law, as a covenant of works, hath the same language. It testifies to the sinner that it hath nothing in reserve for him but eternal death. When it comes with power to the heart, man is convinced that except he be saved through the righteousness of a Surety, he must certainly perish.

We may perceive the *grace* of our God, in providing a remedy, and especially in doing it at such infinite expence. Many pretend to plead for the riches of grace, at the expence of denying the atonement? "How does grace appear," do they say, "if complete satisfaction must be made for sin? Does it not exhibit this perfection in a far more engaging light, if we view God as pardoning sin without requiring  
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“any atonement to justice?” But this doctrine, so far from illustrating, obscures the grace of God. If a friend confers a favour on us, we esteem the favour in proportion to what it cost him. Were it consistent with the nature of God, to pardon sin without any atonement, the display of his grace would be far inferior. But when we know from his word, that he “will by no means clear the guilty,” that, from his essential and necessary love of righteousness, he punishes the wicked; we see the highest reason to admire the grace of God in the gift of his own Son as a sacrifice. This is as much grace to us, as if no atonement had been necessary; because all the blessings of the covenant are given “without money, and without price:” and it is *commended* to us, exhibited in the most engaging point of view, because “God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son.”

We learn the *impossibility* of *escaping* the stroke of divine justice, if we despise the remedy. “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” He that despised Moses’ law, died without mercy.—Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?” And all tread him under foot, who refuse to put the crown of their salvation on his head.

In fine, we perceive the necessity of *reverence* in all our Christian service. In this very way, the apostle, writing to the Hebrews, applies what he had said with respect to the terrors of the law,  
and

and the superior privileges of the gospel. “Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire<sup>i</sup>.” He manifested himself, in this character, under the law. The dispensation under which we live, is very different with respect to immediate temporal tokens of divine indignation. But we still serve the same God. His holiness is invariably the same, even although it is not manifested by such displays of his justice. But even these have not been wanting under the New Testament. What affecting monuments of divine displeasure were Judas Iscariot, and Ananias and Sapphira<sup>k</sup>! God set them up, in the very dawn of the gospel-church, as beacons to deter us from tampering with his justice. For even *our* God is a consuming fire. Such temporal judgments are far less frequent under this dispensation. But for this we may see a sufficient reason. The eternal state is more clearly revealed: and in this the fire of divine justice will burn with far greater heat, than ever it did in temporal punishment. Therefore saith the apostle, in the passage formerly referred to; “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, *much more* shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven<sup>l</sup>.”

## S E C T.

<sup>i</sup> Heb. xii. 28, 29.<sup>k</sup> Acts i. 18.; v. 1.—11.<sup>l</sup> Heb. xii. 25.



## SECTION V.

*On Divine Justice, in visiting the Iniquities of Fathers upon their Children.—Children punished for the sins of Parents.—Parents punished in their Children.—Iniquity visited on those especially who continue in the wicked courses of their Progenitors.—Some sins more remarkably visited on succeeding generations, than others.—This visitation extends farther than to temporal punishment.—Something in human conduct analogous to this procedure of Divine Justice.—Objections answered.*

THE Justice of God, like every other perfection of his nature, is incomprehensible. We often find reason to exclaim ; “ His judgments are a great deep !—How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! ” But we need not wonder that our weak and depraved reason should be lost in the contemplation of that adorable perfection, which is employed in the punishment of sin ; as there is an extent in its evil, which we cannot comprehend.

The divine conduct, in visiting the iniquities of fathers upon their children, is one of those awful displays of justice, which it seems to be a special

cial design of revelation to set before us in the most conspicuous light. With a sincere desire to discover "the mind of the Spirit," let us humbly inquire into the doctrine which the Holy Scriptures contain on this important subject.

1. It is consistent with divine justice, to punish children *for* the *sins* of their parents, although they have had no hand in these. This principle is established by a great variety of facts. For the crime of Ham, the curse was entailed on his posterity by Canaan<sup>m</sup>. Some think that the curse extended to all the posterity of Ham, and that Canaan is particularly mentioned, because this history being immediately written for confirming the faith of the Israelites, the prophecy of Noah was to them a prelude of victory over the Canaanites, and of the possession of their land. Others suppose that Canaan was singled out by the Patriarch, under the influence of the Spirit of inspiration, as having been immediately concerned with Ham in the crime which he committed. But of this we have no evidence whatsoever. Admitting it to be consistent with justice to punish children for the iniquities of their fathers, God, in his adorable sovereignty, might entail the curse in a special manner upon one branch of the posterity of Ham. It has been said, that the curse was not "pronounced upon Canaan for his father Ham's transgression;" that "such arbitrary proceedings are contrary to all our ideas of the  
"divine

<sup>m</sup> Gen. ix. 25.

“divine perfections;” that “the curse upon Canaan was properly a curse upon the Canaanites; that God foreseeing the wickedness of this people, (which began in their father Ham, and greatly increased in this branch of his family), commissioned Noah to pronounce a curse upon them, and to devote them to the servitude and misery, which their more than common vices and iniquities would deserve;” and that “this account was plainly written by Moses, for the encouragement of the Israelites,” &c.

It cannot well be doubted, that the curse especially respected the posterity of Canaan, and that it was recorded for encouraging the Israelites to obey the command of God, by entering into their land. But we certainly do violence to the language of Scripture, and ascribe the greatest impropriety of conduct to the Spirit of inspiration, if we deny that the curse upon Canaan was meant as a punishment of the crime of Ham. Such is the connexion of the history, as necessarily to imply this. “And Ham the father of Canaan saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.—And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew,” as would seem, by immediate revelation, “what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.” We are not merely to consider the design with which this account was “written by Moses,” but the design with which the curse was

was primarily pronounced by Noah under the impulse of the Spirit. And surely nothing can be more plain, than that the curse was denounced against the posterity of Ham, as the punishment of his iniquity. It seems totally incongruous to the character of "the Spirit of revelation," who is also the "Spirit of wisdom," to connect, in the language of prophecy, the punishment of the posterity of Ham with the crime of their ancestor, if there was no connexion of a judicial nature. We do not perceive the propriety of Noah's "pronouncing a curse" on this occasion, if it had no present effect. There is, indeed, just as much reason for supposing, that Shem and Japhet were personally excluded from the blessing, as that the curse had no immediate relation to Ham, but wholly respected his posterity.

Among the first-born in the land of Egypt, who were cut off by the destroying angel, there were doubtless many who had never sinned in their own persons. They were immediately punished for the unbelief and obduracy of their parents. The children of Achan perished with him <sup>p</sup>. No one, who believes revelation, can doubt the account given us of the punishment of the perfidy of Saul to the Gibeonites, first on the nation, and afterwards on his posterity. Nor can it be doubted, that God approved of the severe sentence passed, at the instance of the Gibeonites, on the seven sons of Saul. For it is said, that, in consequence of their execution, "God was entreated  
" for

“for the land <sup>q</sup>.” Now, there is not the least evidence, that any of them concurred in the cruel conduct of their progenitor. Yet the designation of a “bloody house” is transferred to them, because “*he* slew the Gibeonites.” We must believe that God acted with perfect equity in the whole of the transaction. But there is a depth in this judgment which we cannot pretend to fathom.

God hath dealt in this very manner with his own people. He subjected the child, that David had begotten in adultery, to death; and declared, that the sword should never depart from his house, because he had murdered Uriah <sup>r</sup>.

These facts, recorded by the Spirit of God, are perfectly consonant to many doctrinal testimonies contained in Scripture on this subject. Speaking of the wicked, Job saith; “God layeth up his “iniquity for his children.” He compares it to those treasures, which men are eager to amass for their posterity. Thus Jeremiah complains, as personating the afflicted Church of God; “Our fathers have sinned and are not, and we have “borne their iniquities <sup>t</sup>.” Elsewhere he considers this branch of the divine conduct as ground of adoration; “Thou—recompenshest the iniquity “of the fathers into the bosom of their children “after them: the great, the mighty God, the “LORD of Hosts is his name <sup>u</sup>.”

Although men were to disregard the language of Scripture, their own observation would supply them

<sup>q</sup> 2 Sam. xxi. 1.—9. 14.      <sup>r</sup> 2 Sam. xii. 10. 14.      <sup>s</sup> Job xxi. 19.

<sup>t</sup> Lam. v. 7.

<sup>u</sup> Jer. xxxii. 18.



them with sufficient evidence of this truth. Are not children subjected to poverty and want, in consequence of the prodigality of their parents? Do they not derive from them peculiar diseases, which are the natural consequences of vice? Do they not often endure great and long-continued sufferings from such diseases? Do not these frequently issue in premature death? Now, unless it can be proved, that suffering, or even death, is in itself no punishment; it must be admitted, that children are punished, by such hereditary diseases, for the crimes of their parents, although they have had no hand in them.

God visits none in this manner, who are otherwise absolutely innocent. When treated as guilty, in being subjected to suffering in consequence of the sins of their more immediate ancestors, they are primarily viewed as transgressors in their first parent. Thus, indeed, God vindicates his justice in the imputation of Adam's first sin. While many object to this doctrine, as if it were inconsistent with the rectitude of the divine nature, that men should suffer for what was not their personal act; let them shew how, according to this reasoning, it is just with God to visit the iniquities of more immediate progenitors on their posterity: or let them both set aside the evidence of incontestable facts, and fairly deny the truth of the Sacred History in this respect, that they may appear in their real character. Alas! that there is so much refined deism among us; that so many profess to believe the truth of revelation, who

notwithstanding discover the insincerity of their profession, by trampling on the authority of the Spirit of inspiration, when his testimony opposes their own imaginations !

II. The fathers are, according to this procedure, punished *in* their seed. Children are viewed as existing in their parents, long before they have actual being ; as Levi paid tithes in the loins of Abraham. In like manner, parents are viewed as existing in their children, even after they have themselves left the stage of life. This is evident from the very manner in which the blessing, or the curse, was often pronounced. Shem and Japhet were blessed in their posterity, Ham was cursed in his : for both the blessing and the curse had a special respect to succeeding generations. When Jacob received the blessing, it had also a peculiar reference to his descendants ; while Esau was justly punished by God, not only in his person, but in his posterity, because of his profaneness in selling his birthright. The blessings prophetically pronounced by Jacob, on his sons, immediately respected their offspring. Yet the blessing of Joseph is expressed as if it had been merely personal : “ The blessings of thy father  
“ have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors ;—they shall be on the head of Joseph,  
“ and on the crown of the head of him that was  
“ separate from his brethren.” The same observation holds true as to the other blessings. The patriarch views the various tribes as present in the

the persons of their progenitors ; and the sacred historian gives us the very same representation : “ All these are the twelve tribes of Israel : and “ this is it that their father spake unto them, and “ blessed them ; every one according to his blessing he blessed them.” Reuben is punished in the lot of the tribe which was to spring from him : “ Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel ; because thou wentest up to thy father’s bed, then “ defiledst thou it : he went up to my couch.” Simeon and Levi are punished in their seed. Because “ instruments of cruelty were in their habitations,” their father said ; “ I will divide “ them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.” The stain, attending the dispersion of Levi, was indeed afterwards in great measure wiped away ; as God chose this tribe to the service of the tabernacle and temple, and “ scattered them in Jacob” as instructors of the people. But as originally expressed, it was rather a curse than a blessing ; and Levi was himself punished in the denunciation, especially as he had no intimation of the blessed issue.

This punishment is inflicted in various ways and degrees. Parents sometimes see the vengeance executed, before their own death. Thus it was with Eli. He “ honoured his sons above” God ; for when they “ made themselves vile, he restrained them not :” whence he is himself charged with kicking at God’s sacrifice and offering \*. It was therefore foretold concerning his two sons ;

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v Gen. xlix. 26. 28.

w Ver. 3.—7.

x 1 Sam. ii. 29 ; iii. 13.

“ In one day they shall die both of them :” and his life was spared only that he might see the completion of this awful threatening, as a sign of the future infliction of the hereditary judgments denounced against his house. For the LORD had “ told him, that he would judge his house for “ ever, for the iniquity which he knew,” and, by giving no proper check to it, virtually approved. These judgments, although properly affecting his posterity, are all described as directed against himself; whether inflicted during his own life, or in succeeding generations: “ I will perform *against Eli* all things which I have spoken “ concerning his house: when I begin, I will “ also make an end <sup>y</sup>.”

The young generation of Israel, although not like their fathers, bore their iniquity. Their sufferings, however, were especially meant for the punishment of their rebellious parents. For the children suffered, only till that generation was extinct, which had come out of Egypt. This is evident from the sentence pronounced by their God : “ As for you, your carcases, they shall fall in this “ wilderness. And your children shall wander in “ the wilderness forty years, and *bear your whoredoms*,” that is, the punishment of them, “ until “ your carcases be wasted in the wilderness <sup>z</sup>.”

Parents, although they see not the vengeance themselves, are sometimes punished in their seed, by seeing its certainty in the threatening. When Ahab had, by impiety and murder, got possession of

y 1 Sam. iii. 12, 13.

z Numb. xiv. 32, 33.

of the vineyard of Naboth, God sent his servant Elijah to inform him, that he would bring evil upon him, and take away his posterity, and cut off every male from his house. But, in consequence of Ahab's humbling himself, he is informed, that God would not bring the evil in his days<sup>a</sup>. The total destruction, brought on the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, is represented as the punishment of *his* iniquity. For Baasha "smote all the house of Jeroboam, he left not to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had destroyed him, according unto the saying of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite; because of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and which he made Israel sin<sup>b</sup>."

Nor is this visitation confined to the wicked. In this manner hath God often testified his displeasure with his own children. Solomon was assured that, because of his apostacy, the kingdom should be rent from his son. Although this judgment was not to be inflicted in his own days, yet as it was procured by his iniquity, it is spoken of as inflicted on himself: "I will surely rend the kingdom *from thee*, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding, in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son<sup>c</sup>."

Hezekiah, after his miraculous deliverance from Sennacherib, and from a mortal disease, "rendered not again according to the benefit done

H 3

" unto

<sup>a</sup> 1 Kings xxi. 27. 29.<sup>b</sup> 1 Kings xv. 29, 30.<sup>c</sup> 1 Kings xi. 11, 12.



“unto him.” When the ambassadors of the king of Babylon came to congratulate him on his recovery, he shewed them all his armour, and his treasures. This at first view might seem a blameless action ; a piece of common civility to strangers, who had come from a distant country, or of respect to the sovereign who sent them. But, in judging of actions, the divine eye is especially fixed on the intention. In this respect Hezekiah failed. It is therefore said ; “ God left him, to “ try him, that he might know all that was in his “ heart.” And it is declared, that “ his heart “ was lifted up ; therefore there was wrath upon “ him.” Either he valued himself too much on account of the signal tokens of divine favour he had received, as if they had been merited by his righteous conduct ; or trusted in his riches, as if they could have proved the means of his defence : or perhaps he offended in both respects. Whatever might be the particular ground of displeasure, God declared by the prophet Isaiah, that his sons should be carried away captive, and be “ eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.” Wrath was *upon him*, although it came not in his days<sup>d</sup>. For even the sincere repentance of the servants of God, after great transgressions, has not prevented, although it has sometimes delayed, the judicial visitation. As to personal guilt and punishment, the sin of David was taken away ; but not the punishment as it respected his family. God testified his displeasure with him, as he had formerly

<sup>d</sup> 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, 26, 31. ; Isa. xxxix. 7, 8.

formerly done with respect to Eli; when he swore that the iniquity of his house should “not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.” He hath observed this line of conduct in various instances; that he might give the strongest testimony as to the evil and demerit of sin, and his infinite and irreconcilable hatred of it, although the transgressor himself was the object of his special and unchangeable love.

It may be said perhaps, that it is easily conceivable how parents could thus be punished in their seed, when God was pleased to communicate his will by a special revelation to the individual; although he should not himself live to see the completion of the threatening: but that matters now stand on a very different footing, as no such extraordinary intimations can be expected. Let it be remembered; however, that “whatsoever was written aforetime, was written for our learning.” Although, therefore, there be now no particular intimation of the divine will by the Spirit of prophecy, the threatenings and punishments, recorded in Scripture, are warnings to us of what we may justly expect, if we go on in our trespasses.

This is one of the means which God employs for maintaining his moral government: and we must admire his wisdom in the choice of it. Such is the love which the most of parents bear to their children, that they would rather suffer in their own persons, than that they should suffer. To

H 4

how

how many sufferings, indeed, do they cheerfully expose themselves, for their preservation and comfort ! Thus, as has been observed by the Bishop of Meaux, “ God shews parents, that according  
 “ to the secret order of his judgments, he continues their rewards or punishments after their  
 “ death ; and holds them in submission to his  
 “ laws by their dearest tie, that is, by the tie of  
 “ their children <sup>f</sup>.”

III. God visits the iniquities of fathers upon their children, especially when they take the *same*, or *similar courses*. To such the commination, annexed to the second precept of the law, immediately refers : “ I the LORD thy God am  
 “ a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and  
 “ fourth generation of them that *hate me* <sup>g</sup>.” When God here threatens to *visit*, the language does not simply signify to punish, *iniquity* ; but denotes punishment even after a long, or a considerable delay. Although men may suppose that he takes no notice of the sins committed against him, or that he has in effect forgotten them ; he will eventually shew that they have been accurately observed, and that he hath been treasuring up vengeance. We have already seen, that God, without any injury to his justice, may punish children for the sins of their fathers, although not chargeable with the same sins ; because he still views them as sinners. But the threatening referred

<sup>f</sup> Bossuet's Universal Hist. Vol. i. Part 2. Sect. 4.

<sup>g</sup> Exod. xx. 5.

ferred to marks the more ordinary tenor of his procedure. Succeeding generations are considered as manifesting their hatred of God, by continuing in a course of iniquity. They may do it in different degrees. Sometimes, by pursuing the very same track. The Lord complains of his ancient people ; “ Even from the days of your fathers, ye are gone away from mine ordinances<sup>h</sup>.” Thus the iniquity, for which God visits, is not merely that of their fathers ; but their own, because they have imitated their wicked example. At other times they become worse than their ancestors. Their sins, although of the same kind, are more aggravated. The Jews, under the Old Testament, killed the prophets : their posterity were the murderers of “ the holy and just One.” Often, the children do not actually commit the same crimes, but others of a similar nature which discover the same spirit. Or, they testify their approbation of the deeds of their fathers, by justifying, even while they do not imitate, their conduct. “ This their way “ is their folly ; yet their posterity approve their sayings<sup>i</sup>.” Perhaps their language is ; “ Wherefore hath the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us ? or what is our iniquity<sup>k</sup> ?” But posterity may be subjected to the punishment of the sins of their progenitors, although they do not practically imitate them, nor justify their conduct. The jealous God views them as approving, if they do not acknowledge, expressly condemn

<sup>h</sup> Mal. iii. 7.<sup>i</sup> Psal. xlix. 13.<sup>k</sup> Jer. xvi. 10.

demn and mourn over, the iniquities of their fathers. Hence he addresses his Church in this manner ; “ Have ye forgotten the wickedness of  
 “ your fathers, and the wickedness of the kings of  
 “ Judah, and the wickedness of their wives, and  
 “ your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your  
 “ wives?—They are not humbled, neither have  
 “ they feared, nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes that I set before you, and before your fathers.  
 “ Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God  
 “ of Israel, Behold, I will set my face against  
 “ you for evil, and to cut off all Judah<sup>1</sup>. ”

In the addition to the precept, this visitation is mentioned, as extending “ unto the third and  
 “ fourth generation.” But we are not to view this as an absolute limitation ; or to conclude, that God restricts the punishment of the sins of ancestors to any one particular generation. The contrary appears from the indefinite manner in which the specification is made. This punishment extends sometimes to the third, and sometimes to the fourth generation. In other instances, it is carried farther. When the Jews crucified the Lord of glory, they cried out, “ His blood be upon us, and on our children : ” and this awful curse hath been entailed on their posterity for more than seventeen centuries, or nearly sixty generations. All this time, they have not only been “ shut up in unbelief,” but cast over the hedge of the vineyard, and set up to all nations as “ an  
 “ astonishment, a hissing, and a curse.” The quarrel

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xliv. 9.—11.



rel at times is not prosecuted even to the fourth generation.

This specification seems to be made, however, that the threatening might have a keener edge to the heart of a parent. As many live to see the third and fourth generation of their own descendants, it signifies that even the blessing of “seeing “their children’s children<sup>m</sup>,” shall to them be converted into a curse; as they shall be preserved in life, only to see their own sin in the punishment of their beloved offspring. In this sense is the language of Job, concerning the wicked man, verified; “God layeth up his iniquity for his “children: he rewardeth him, and he shall know “it. His eyes shall see his destruction, and he “shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty<sup>n</sup>.”

This limitation also marks the remarkable difference between the exercise of judgment and of mercy, in the divine procedure; and shows how much “mercy rejoiceth over judgment.” For a promise is added, as a blessed counterpart to the threatening, as a gracious encouragement to children to cleave to the God of their fathers:— “And shewing mercy unto thousands of them “that love me, and keep my commandments.” But while the threatening flows from justice, the promise is wholly the fruit of grace.

Whereas the visitation is continued, in many instances, to the third or fourth generation; in others, it is delayed from one generation to another, to a third, or a fourth. The arch-rebel seems

<sup>m</sup> Psal. cxxviii. 6.

<sup>n</sup> Job xxi. 19, 20.

seems to pass with impunity ; and the vengeance primarily, and, as might seem, chiefly merited by him, overtakes his posterity. This must often be principally ascribed to divine sovereignty. In other cases, a particular reason is assigned for this procedure. Ahab “ sold himself to work evil in the “ fight of the LORD.” Yet because he “ humbled “ himself,” in consequence of the threatening, although a stranger to true repentance, God would not bring the evil in his days, but delayed it till those of his son<sup>o</sup>. In the second generation also, God punished the iniquity of Baasha king of Israel. Then Zimri, according to the prediction of Jehu the prophet, destroyed all the house of Baasha, “ for all the sins of Baasha, and the sins “ of Elah his son<sup>p</sup>.” He visited the iniquities of two generations at once. His vengeance against Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, “ who made Israel “ to sin,” was in like manner delayed till the second generation<sup>q</sup>. A longer respite was given to the family of Jehu. “ The LORD said unto him, “ Because thou hast done well, in executing that “ which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto “ the house of Ahab according to all that was in “ mine heart, thy children of the fourth genera- “ tion shall sit upon the throne of Israel.” And the truth of the prediction was manifested by the event<sup>r</sup>. But it deserves our attention, that, although he had externally done all that was in God’s heart as to the vengeance denounced against the

<sup>o</sup> 1 Kings xxi. 19. 29.  
 xv. 27.—29.

<sup>p</sup> Chap. xvi. 7. 9. 13.  
 2 Kings x. 30. ; xv. 12.

<sup>q</sup> Chap. xiv. 10. ;

the house of Ahab, on which account his posterity were so long preserved on the throne ; yet as he acted in this matter without any upright intentions, and as he turned aside to the sins of Jeroboam, all this seems to be only the exercise of divine forbearance. He fulfilled God's purpose ; yet because he acted from sinister motives, God views him as the murderer of his master, and long afterwards " maketh inquisition for blood." His great-great-grandson is murdered by Shallum, the son of Jabesh ; and thus, according to the prophecy of Hosea, God " avenged the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu <sup>s</sup>." Baasha had in like manner been the instrument of the predicted vengeance against the house of Jeroboam ; yet God denounces vengeance against Baasha and his house, " because he killed" Nadab the son of Jeroboam <sup>t</sup>. Here let us admire the wisdom, the holiness and the justice of our God ; who employs wicked men to accomplish his purposes of vengeance ; while the sin is wholly their own, and exposes them to severe punishment, which sooner or later shall certainly be inflicted.

Nebuchadnezzar, although accomplishing the divine purpose against Judah, subjected himself to " the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of " his temple." Therefore it was threatened ; " I " will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity <sup>u</sup>." But as God meant to try his people for seventy years in Babylon, the vengeance was delayed till the reign

<sup>s</sup> Hof. i. 4.<sup>t</sup> 1 Kings xvi. 7.<sup>u</sup> Jer. xxv. 12.

reign of Belshazzar his grandson. Therefore it was predicted ; “ All nations shall serve him, and “ his son, and his son’s son, until the very time “ of his land come ; and then many nations and “ great kings shall serve themselves of him <sup>v</sup>.” They served themselves *of him* in the punishment of his posterity. Hence also is the command given ; “ Prepare slaughter for his children, for the “ iniquity of their fathers <sup>w</sup>.” To shew in the clearest point of view, that this punishment was peculiarly “ the vengeance of his temple,” God so ordered it in his providence, and he hath left it on record in the Sacred History, that it was on that very night in which the holy vessels of the house of God were profaned, that Babylon was taken and Belshazzar slain <sup>x</sup>.

Thus also it appears, that while slaughter was prepared for Belshazzar “ for the iniquity of his “ fathers,” this iniquity was viewed by divine justice as his own. He formally entered into fellowship with his grandfather, by his impiety in defiling the sacred vessels of the temple ; and set the seal of his approbation to all that had been done against the house and heritage of JEHOVAH. God bore with him till he thus served himself heir to the guilt of Nebuchadnezzar ; but then the exercise of divine long-suffering was at an end. It has been supposed that this was the feast, annually celebrated by the Babylonians, in honour of their great god Bel. They at any rate mingled with it their false religion. For while they

v Jer. xxvii. 7.

w Isa. xiv. 21.

x Dan. v. 1.—4. 28. 30.

they drank out of the holy vessels of the temple of JEHOVAH, they “praised the gods of silver and “gold<sup>v</sup>. It seems most probable, that these vessels had been brought forth as a trophy of victory over the true God; and that Belshazzar praised his false deities, by ascribing to them a superiority of power over that God who had been worshipped at Jerusalem, the spoils of whose temple now adorned the table of his riot.

It may seem surprising, that the individual “who hath made the earth to tremble,—who “hath made the world as a wilderness,—and hath “not opened the house of his prisoners,” that he who hath been the original and principal cause of the controversy, should go to his grave in peace; and that the vengeance should be executed on his posterity of the third, fourth or fifth generation, although perhaps they have never sold themselves to work wickedness like him. This is indeed one of the deep things of God. But there are various considerations which tend to remove the difficulty.

When God spares the original culprit, he hath generally some great *providential end* to serve by this conduct. When he spared Jeroboam, it was for judgment to the house of David. He suffered Nebuchadnezzar to die in peace, for accomplishing his purpose in the establishment of the first great monarchy, as well as for prolonging the visitation on rebellious Judah, and the other nations of the earth. Neither of these designs could have



have been fulfilled, had the vengeance come in its full extent in his days. It must also be remembered, that this proud and ambitious monarch was personally visited for seven years by an unexampled judgment. He, who had “made the world as a wilderness,” had “a beast’s heart given unto him,—was driven from men, and “had his dwelling with the beasts of the field.”

Although the sins of posterity should not equal those of their ancestors in atrocity, there is notwithstanding a constant *accumulation* of guilt. Sin is represented as a debt; and the original debt is greatly increased by the additions made in successive generations. The men of this world are well acquainted with the doctrine of accumulation, as it respects earthly property. But alas! they pay no regard to the accumulation of guilt; which exposes them to that awful retribution threatened by the Judge of the universe: “Behold, it is written before me, I will not keep silence, but will recompence, even recompence, into their bosom, your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the LORD: —therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom<sup>a</sup>.” To this purpose Moses said to the young generation, who had been born in the wilderness; “Behold, ye are risen up in your fathers’ stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the LORD toward Israel<sup>b</sup>.”

As

<sup>z</sup> Dan. iv. 16. 22. 33.

<sup>a</sup> Isa. lxxv. 6, 7.

<sup>b</sup> Num. xxxii. 14.

As this guilt is increased, it is also *aggravated*. If those, who walk in the evil ways of their fathers, are favoured with a revelation of the divine will, their guilt is aggravated from the very circumstance of their having these iniquities before their eyes. For these, in their connexion with the threatenings of God's word, ought to have been viewed as beacons, set up in providence, for deterring them from a similar course. Therefore, the evil example of ancestors, who enjoyed the outward means of grace, so far from being admitted as an extenuation of the guilt of their posterity, is still represented by God as enhancing it. "Thus saith the LORD, For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the LORD,—and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked <sup>c</sup>." The guilt of Babylon was greatly increased by the residence of God's people in that land. "We would have healed Babylon," say they, "but she is not healed <sup>d</sup>."

It is a still higher aggravation, if God has not only threatened, but *executed* his *vengeance* on their fathers, for these very sins. Of this the history of Israel affords ample illustration. Thus God speaks by Ezekiel: "Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? and commit ye whoredoms after their abominations?—Like as I pleaded with your fathers,—so will I plead with you <sup>e</sup>." There is no evidence that Bel-

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I

shazzar

<sup>c</sup> Amos ii. 4.<sup>d</sup> Jer. li. 9.<sup>e</sup> Ezek. xx. 30. 36.

Shazzar had personally committed so many crimes as his ancestor Nebuchadnezzar. But in this respect was his guilt peculiarly aggravated. Although he *knew* the awful judgment that had been brought on Nebuchadnezzar, his heart, so far from being *humbled*, was so *lifted up*, that he presumed to profane the holy vessels of the temple of JEHOVAH. The vengeance, therefore, could be no longer delayed. The life of the king, and the existence of the kingdom, terminated together <sup>i</sup>.

When God has given no practical testimonies of his displeasure with wicked predecessors, his very *forbearance* proves an occasion of the aggravation of the guilt of posterity, if they either continue in their wicked courses, or are not humbled on account of them. All who “despise the riches  
“of his—*forbearance* and long-suffering,—*trea-*  
“*sure* up to themselves wrath against the day of  
“wrath <sup>g</sup>.” This conduct, on the part of the Israelites, is frequently exhibited as a special aggravation of their guilt, and as both hastening and augmenting their punishment. After a particular enumeration of the mercies manifested towards them, it is added; “Yet they turned back, and  
“dealt unfaithfully like their fathers.—When  
“God heard this he was wroth, and greatly ab-  
“horred Israel <sup>h</sup>.”

The case is similar, when long-suffering hath been mingled with all the tokens of divine displeasure; or when God hath “often turned his  
“anger

<sup>i</sup> Dan. vi. 19.—23. 28. 30.    <sup>g</sup> Rom. ii. 4, 5.    <sup>h</sup> Psal. lxxviii. 57.—59.

“ anger away, and hath not stirred up all his  
 “ wrath.” Thus Nehemiah confesses the guilt of  
 his people: “ Our fathers dealt proudly, and har-  
 “ dened their necks, and hearkened not to thy  
 “ commandments.—Yet thou in thy manifold mer-  
 “ cies forsookest them not in the wilderness.—  
 “ Moreover, thou gavest them kingdoms and na-  
 “ tions.—Nevertheless, they were disobedient and  
 “ rebelled against thee.—Therefore thou deliver-  
 “ edst them into the hand of their enemies.—  
 “ Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and  
 “ testifiedst against them by thy Spirit in thy pro-  
 “ phets ; yet would they not give ear ; therefore  
 “ gavest thou them into the hand of the people of  
 “ the lands ;”

iv. There are *some sins* which God more re-  
 markably visits on succeeding generations, than  
 others. The first we shall mention is idolatry, or  
 the corruption of his worship and ordinances.  
 Hence we find this threatening appended to the  
 second commandment. God is especially jealous  
 as to his service. He prosecuted his quarrel with  
 the seed of Jeroboam, because in this respect he  
 had “ made Israel to sin.” Whatever excuses  
 men may offer for apostacy from the true wor-  
 ship of God, he accounts all idolaters *haters* of  
 himself ; for this is the character given to those  
 who break this precept.

As this threatening illustrates the heinous guilt  
 of idolatry, we may see the propriety of connect-

ing it with the second precept in another respect ; because children are so very apt to follow the example of their parents in religion. How often do men give this as an apology for a false, or what they acknowledge to be a corrupt religion ; how often is it employed as an argument even against impartial examination, that their religion is the same which their fathers professed ?

Breach of covenant is another sin which God especially punishes in the same manner. Zedekiah had entered into a covenant, to give his subjects that liberty which God had appointed in the law. But he and his princes afterwards transgressed it. Wherefore the LORD denounced vengeance against them ; “ —Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of “ their enemies.” This vengeance was executed in a most affecting manner. The king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and then he put them out<sup>k</sup> ; as if God would suffer this wretched parent to retain his sight, only till he had witnessed the merciless extermination of the fruit of his body.

The shedding of the blood of his saints is a sin that God remarkably visits on succeeding generations. All innocent blood defiles the land in which it is shed. If men should make no inquisition for it, God will. It hath been a thousand times remarked, even by those who know not the truth, that the providence of God is more signally seen in the discovery and punishment of murder, than

<sup>k</sup> Jer. xxxiv. 21. ; xxxix. 6, 7.



than with respect to any other crime. The barbarous heathens of Melita, when they saw the viper fasten on Paul's hand, had only one opinion about the matter ; and this they formed without hesitation. "No doubt," said they, "this man "is a murderer, whom though he hath escaped "the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live<sup>1</sup>." Nor is it surprising that God should especially prosecute this sin. We find the reason of this, in the law given to all the sons of Noah, on the restoration of the world. He adjudges to death every murderer, because "in the image of God "made he man<sup>m</sup>." This crime is an attack on God himself, in his only visible image in this lower world. But when it is committed in the way of persecution, it is still more heinous in his sight. There is a double attack on the Majesty of heaven ; on his image, as it still imperfectly remains, in consequence of the first creation, and also as restored by the second. Nay, when men are "persecuted for righteousness' sake," God knows that his image in the new creation, is the very ground of the persecution.

Need we wonder, then, that "the death of his "faints" should be especially "precious in his "fight?" Their immediate persecutors may seem to escape ; but the guilt descends to succeeding generations. God deals with persons, families, societies and nations, in a way peculiar to himself. There is a certain appointed measure of iniquity that he allows them to fill up, before he call them

to account. When he promised Canaan to Abraham and his seed, he did not give them immediate possession. They had to wait for about four hundred years for the accomplishment of the promise ; because “ the iniquity of the Amorites was “ not yet full .” Thus God deals with wicked families. When they have persecuted his servants, he fulfils his threatening ; “ They shall “ judge thee,—after the manner of women that “ shed blood ; because—blood is in their hands. “ —They shall slay their sons and their daughters .” In this manner did God visit the blood of his servant Naboth on the house of Ahab. For the crime of this wicked prince was not simply murder, but persecution. He shed the blood of Naboth, for his strict adherence to the divine precept, in refusing to sell, or to exchange, his inheritance <sup>P</sup>. The vengeance overtook Jehoram in the portion of Naboth, in that very field which his father had procured for himself by the murder of a righteous man.

So striking was this dispensation of providence, that it forcibly brought to the recollection of the wicked Jehu the prediction delivered by Elijah, which he repeated to his captain in these words ; “ Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the LORD ; “ and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the “ LORD .” Manasseh “ shed innocent blood very “ much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one “ end

<sup>n</sup> Gen. xv. 16.    <sup>o</sup> Ezek. xxiii. 45.—47.  
Lev. xxv. 23, 25. ; Numb. xxxvi. 6.—9.

<sup>p</sup> 1 Kings xxi. 2, 3. comp.  
<sup>q</sup> 2 Kings ix. 21, 24.—26.

“end to another.” This God visited on the third generation of his posterity; and not on them only, but on the whole nation. For as they had suffered themselves to be seduced by him, “to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel;” God viewed them as having made the blood-guiltiness of Manasseh their own, because they used no proper means for the prevention or restraint of this atrocious wickedness. The Chaldeans were sent against Judah “to destroy it;” and this is the reason assigned: “Surely at the commandment of the LORD came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did; and also for the innocent blood that he shed, — which the LORD would not pardon.”

Thus did the Jews, who rejected the Son of God, “fill up the measure of their fathers,” as he forewarned them: “Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes, and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias.—Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation.” Many of their predecessors had been severely punish-

I 4

ed

r 2 Kings xxi. 16.

s 2 Kings xxi. 9.

t 2 Kings xxiii. 26.; xxiv.

3, 4. See also Jer. xv. 3, 4.

u Mat. xxiii. 32, 34.—36.

ed for this very crime. But the punishment due to them as a nation had been still in a great measure deferred. This generation killed the *beir*, and thus explicitly set the seal of their approbation to all that their fathers had done to the *servants* <sup>x</sup>. They murdered the great Prophet of the Church, and thus practically vindicated the conduct of their ancestors, in shedding the blood of his messengers. They killed "the just One," and brought on themselves the guilt of all the righteous blood formerly shed. God was therefore to visit them with as much severity, as if he had never before made inquisition for blood. As their guilt was accumulated from one generation to another, their punishment was to be unexampled. He would prosecute his controversy with them, with as great severity as was possible, without utterly destroying them as a people. Hence the apostle Paul gives this account of their sin and punishment: They "both killed the Lord "Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us ;—to fill up their sins alway : for," or therefore "the wrath is come upon them to the "uttermost <sup>y</sup>." \*

A

x Mat. xxi. 35.—41.

y 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16.

\* The observations of a very eminent writer, on the parallel passage, Luke xi. 50, 51., deserve our attention. "There is in this commination an appearance of severity beyond the rule established, Exod. xx. 5.—Here the vengeance and punishment due unto the sins of an hundred generations, is threatened to be inflicted on that which was present.—The case here is *particular*. That in the command respects the common case of all false worshippers, and their posterity ; but this respects the persecution unto blood and death of the true worshippers of God. Now, though God

A similar account is given of the guilt and visitation of Rome. In answer to the cry of "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God," during the heathen persecutions, it is said, that "they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." This undoubtedly respects those that were to suffer under Rome anti-christian. The guilt is represented as one; so also

God be very much provoked with the sins of false worshippers, yet he can either bear with them, or pass over their sins with lesser punishments, or at least for a long season; but when they come to persecution, and the blood of them who worship him in spirit and in truth, in his appointed season he will not spare them; their own, and the iniquities of their predecessors, shall be avenged on them, which will be the end of the anti-christian church state, after all its present triumph.

"All those who, from the beginning of the world, suffered unto blood on the account of religion, suffered *in the cause of Christ*, for their faith in him, and confession of him; namely, as he was promised unto the Church. Unto him and his office did Abel, *by faith*, bear testimony, in the bloody sacrifice that he offered. So it is said that Moses, in his danger for killing the Egyptian, bare "the reproach of Christ," because he did it in faith of the promised seed, which was Christ. They were therefore all slain in the cause of Christ; and whereas this generation was to slay Christ himself, and did so, they did therein approve of, and justify all the blood that was shed from the foundation of the world; and made themselves justly liable unto the punishment due unto it. Hence our Saviour tells them †, that they, the men of that generation, slew Zechariah, who was actually slain many hundred years before.

"—When a sinful church and people have passed the utmost bounds of divine patience and forbearance, they shall fall into such *abominable crying sins* and provocations, as shall render the utmost vengeance beneath their deserts. So Josephus affirms of this generation, after they had rejected and slain the Lord Christ, that they fell into such an hell of provoking abominations, that "if the Romans had not come and destroyed them, God would have sent fire and brimstone upon them from heaven, as he did on Sodom."—Owen's Humble Testimony unto the Goodness and Severity of God, p. 2,—4.

† Mat. xxiii. 35.

2 Rev. vi. 9.—11.



so is the vengeance. As the church of Rome hath adopted almost all the idolatries of that heathenism which preceded her, only with a change of names, whence her members are called the *Gentiles*<sup>a</sup>; she hath also in another respect appropriated the guilt of Rome heathen as her own, by carrying on the same accursed work of persecuting the saints. Therefore it is said; “In her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain on the earth<sup>b</sup>.” The blood of all that have been slain on the earth; that is, for the sake of religion, is ascribed to her; because the greatest part of it has been shed either by her immediate agency, by her instigation, or in consequence of adhering to her bloody principles. But perhaps the *earth* here denotes the extent of the Roman empire; as the term is most generally used in this prophecy. And indeed, there has scarcely been any blood shed within the limits of the empire, whatever has been the pretence, that may not be traced to the skirts of this harlot. Even those wars, which have not been waged expressly under the pretence of religion, have generally been owing to her detestable policy, to the influence of her principles as intoxicating the nations, or to the secret machinations of her members.

v. The punishment with which God visits children, for the iniquity of their fathers, is *not merely* of a *temporal* kind. Not to mention other considerations,

<sup>a</sup> Rev. xi. 2.

<sup>b</sup> Rev. xviii. 24.

siderations, this appears from the contrast stated in the threatening. Surely, the mercy which God keeps for thousands is not confined to this life: and it is not natural to think, that the judgment opposed to it should be limited in this manner. But God does not condemn any to eternal punishment, properly and immediately on the ground of those iniquities which their fathers have committed. The utmost we can suppose is, that as the punishment of guilty parents, he withholds from their children that grace which he is under no obligation to confer on any, leaves them to the workings of their own corruptions, and thus suffers them to imitate the wicked conduct of their parents. At length the sentence of his wrath goes forth against them, as having made the sins of their fathers their own. To this purpose that man of God, Calvin, expresses his sentiments: "If the whole nature of man deserves  
"condemnation, we are assured that destruction  
"is prepared for those from whom God with-  
"holds his grace. They notwithstanding perish  
"by their own iniquity, not by any unjust ha-  
"tred on the part of God. Nor is there any room  
"left for demanding, why they are not aided by  
"the saving grace of God, as well as others.—If  
"the visitation, of which we speak, is fulfilled,  
"when the Lord removes from the posterity of  
"the wicked his grace, the light of his truth, and  
"the other means of salvation; so that the chil-  
"dren, blinded, and deserted of him, tread in the  
"footsteps of their parents, they sustain the curse

" on

“ on account of paternal iniquities ; but in their  
 “ being subjected to temporal miseries, and at  
 “ length to eternal destruction, they are thus pu-  
 “ nished by the righteous judgment of God, not  
 “ for the sins of others, but for their own <sup>c</sup>.” The  
 observations of that eminent light of our own  
 land, Durham, merit our particular attention.  
 They contain an answer to this question. “ How  
 “ doth God reach children with eternal plagues  
 “ for their parents’ sins? Answ. He doth it cer-  
 “ tainly, and he doth it justly : therefore the chil-  
 “ dren must not only be considered as guilty, but  
 “ as guilty of the sins of their parents, which we  
 “ may thus conceive ; 1. As to the child of a  
 “ wicked parent, lying in natural corruption, God  
 “ denieth and withholdeth his renewing and  
 “ restraining grace which he is not obliged to  
 “ confer ; and the Lord in this may respect the  
 “ parents’ guilt justly. 2. When grace is denied,  
 “ then followeth the temptation of the parents’  
 “ practice ; the devil stirring up to the like sin,  
 “ and they furthering their children to wicked-  
 “ nefs by their example, advice, authority, &c.  
 “ So that it cometh to pass in God’s justice, that  
 “ they are given up to vent their natural cor-  
 “ ruption in these ways, and so come, as it is  
 “ Psal. xlix. 13., to approve their parents’ say-  
 “ ings. 3. Upon this followeth God’s casting  
 “ the child, now guilty of his parent’s faults, in-  
 “ to eternal perdition with him : and that this is  
 “ the meaning of the threatening, will appear by  
 “ the

“ the examples of God’s justice in this matter,  
 “ when wicked parents have children that are not  
 “ so much miserable in regard of temporal things;  
 “ as they are wicked, cursed, and plagued with  
 “ ungodliness. So were Cain’s children, so were  
 “ the children of Ham, and so were Esau’s; who  
 “ were all for a long time prosperous in the world,  
 “ but following their father’s sins, (a main part of  
 “ their curse), God afterward visited them on  
 “ them, with sad temporal judgments also <sup>d</sup>.”

The learned Dr Barrow, although adhering to a different system, expresses himself on this subject, in language much of the same import. He extends the visitation to spiritual, as well as temporal, judgments; declaring it to be the meaning of the threatening, that on account of the sins of ancestors, God “ will withdraw his free favours from” their children. “ That measure of grace and indulgence,” he subjoins, “ which otherwise the son of such a person (had he not been a great traitor against God) might according to the general course of God’s goodness have received, the which might have more effectually restrained him from sin, and consequently have prevented his guilt and his punishment, God may well (in consistence with his justice and goodness, to manifest his detestation of heinous wickedness), withhold from him <sup>e</sup>.”

vi. The

<sup>d</sup> Exposit. Ten Commandments, p. 117.

<sup>e</sup> Exposition of the Decalogue, p. 400, 401.

VI. The justice of this procedure is admitted, according to the received principles of *equity among men*. In almost all nations, it is accounted just that children should suffer for the crimes of their parents. Debts descend with property; and he who intermeddles with the property, is legally considered as serving himself heir to all the debt attached to it. Now, he who imitates, who justifies, or who does not sincerely confess and bewail the iniquity of his fathers, in like manner serves himself heir to all the debt of guilt which they have contracted towards God. Is it just in man to set so severe a stigma on treason and some other crimes deeply affecting society, as to deprive the children, although personally innocent, of both the honours and the estates enjoyed by their parents, and otherwise legally descending to them? and shall we suppose that sin, as committed against the Judge of the universe, is of so much less importance, as to refuse to him the right of punishing it in a similar manner?

So far from quarrelling with the justice of God, should we not rather admire his long-suffering and mercy in this procedure? Often he delays punishment from one generation to another, giving time for consideration and repentance. If “the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil, because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily,” the blame is wholly their own, not God’s. The riches of his goodness should produce an effect directly contrary; for it “leads to repentance.”

It



It would seem, that at times God punishes the religious children of the wicked, for the sins of their parents; but eventually for their good, both for time and for eternity. For the sins of Jeroboam, God had threatened to “take away the remnant of his house, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone.” When Abijah, the pious son of so wicked a father, fell sick, God would not spare his life, because of the vengeance he had denounced. But his affliction, we may be assured from the tenor of the divine conduct to all the heirs of salvation, was overruled in subserviency to his eternal good. And even an early death was to him converted into a blessing in a temporal respect; as he was saved from the violence and ignominy that awaited all the rest of Jeroboam’s seed. It was therefore foretold concerning him: “He only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.”

Here I shall only add, that in Scripture we have various examples of God’s visiting the iniquities of one or more individuals, if not duly punished, on a whole society. This was the case as to the transgression of Achan, and of Korah. This may assist us in thinking of divine justice, as displayed in visiting the iniquities of fathers on their children. For there is an analogy between the one and the other. A society, presently existing, is viewed as if individually one, because the various

ous members have one common centre of union, are all parts constituting one whole, and form one body in a civil or religious respect. A family or nation is also viewed as one, in its successive generations; both because of their natural relations, parents being continued in their posterity; and also because of their collective unity, as they still constitute the same body, notwithstanding the change of individuals.

I shall now consider some objections that have been made to this doctrine.

1. It hath been objected, that it cannot be true, because it would imply a contradiction in the language of Scripture; especially as it is said, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father g.” But there is no contradiction between this and the precept. The son here meant is not a wicked person; but one who, being come to years of discretion, disapproves and forsakes the unrighteous way of his father. For it is declared; “When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live h.” Now, the threatening added to the second commandment, respects not righteous children, but those who, choosing and continuing in the wicked ways of their fathers, plainly declare that they are “haters of God:” and, as has been seen, although others have been punished,

g Ezek. xviii. 20.

h Ver. 19.

nished, this is not the ordinary tenor of providential dispensations.

It must also be observed, that here a reply is made to the unjust and insolent cavils of an obdurate people. They presumptuously alleged, that God's ways were not equal. Asserting their own innocence, they pretended, that all the punishment brought on them as a nation, especially in their captivity, was for the iniquities of their fathers. Hence it became a proverb with them, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." To illustrate the justice of his procedure, God informs them, that he should proportion their punishment to their personal crimes. Here, then, God does not deny his right to visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children; but declares, that in dealing with this people, for some time at least, he was willing to proceed with them, as if such a threatening had never been made. He does not tell what he might do, in strict justice; but what he would do in fact, to silence their charges of injustice. This is not the promulgation of a standing law, but of a temporary dispensation for a particular reason. It is an answer to the presumptuous query of the Jews, "Doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father <sup>k</sup>?" This answer at the same time seems to intimate, that although in their present punishment, God had "recompensed into their bosoms their iniquities, and the iniquities of their fathers together," yet as far as

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adults

adults at least were concerned, they suffered no more than they would have done according to the demerit of their own crimes. They thought they were themselves innocent ; but they had made the iniquities of their fathers their own, by treading in their steps,

2. It has been asserted, that this kind of punishment was peculiar to the old dispensation, and that it is abolished under the new. It has been said by one learned writer, that “ this punishment was only to supply the want of a future state ;” and that this “ is evident from hence, that towards the conclusion of this extraordinary economy, when God, by the later prophets, reveals his purpose of giving them a new dispensation, in which a future state of reward and punishment was to be brought to light, it is then declared in the most express manner, that he will abrogate the law of punishing children for the crimes of their parents. Jeremiah, speaking of this new dispensation, says : “ In *those* days, they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a four grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge : but every *one shall die for his own iniquity*, every man that eateth the four grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. Behold the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel,—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers<sup>1</sup>,” &c. The author referred to also

<sup>1</sup> Warburton’s Divine Legation, vol. iv. p. 327, &c.

also quotes that passage from Ezekiel, which we have already considered.

This ingenious writer has indeed strained every nerve, in order to shew that there was no revelation of a future state under the Mosaic dispensation. But on this point, suffice it to say, that all the learning he has displayed is but a mere waste of words, as long as we have the reasoning of Christ with the Sadducees, in proof of the doctrine of a resurrection, from the language of God to Moses<sup>k</sup>. While the foundation of his system is false, it is impossible that the superstructure should be solid.

That these words, "The days come,—that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel," refer to the New Testament, there is no ground to doubt; because they are thus applied by an inspired apostle. But there is not the same evidence as to the words preceding<sup>l</sup>. All that certainly appears is, that they immediately refer to the days succeeding the captivity, and the restoration of the Jews to their own land; when they should not complain, as formerly, that they suffered for the iniquity of their fathers, because a great portion of the deserved punishment should be inflicted on them in the furnace of Babylon. There is no reference in the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel to the gospel dispensation. There is nothing that carries forward the declaration, on which the objection is founded, to the New Testament. God evidently speaks of his conduct towards the very same people, who had

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accused

<sup>k</sup> Luke xx. 37, 38.

<sup>l</sup> Jer. xxxi. 29, 30.



accused him of injustice. He speaks of it as what should take place, not in any future age, but from that day forward: "As I live, saith the LORD " God, ye shall not have occasion *any more* to use " this proverb in Israel <sup>m</sup>."

It must be acknowledged, however, that the passage in Jeremiah has been understood, by some of the warmest friends of the doctrines of the gospel, as respecting New-Testament times, and as denoting the greater mildness of this dispensation. According to the general tenor of the Mosaic economy, indeed, God acted with far more severity. "Every transgression received a just recompence " of reward." This threatening, among others, was executed with more rigour and frequency; and the tokens of divine displeasure were of a more sensible and striking kind. As temporal rewards were more suitable to the character of the dispensation, so were temporal punishments; when the eternal state was more obscurely revealed, and to be discerned especially through a multitude of shadows. But although the threatening is not executed with the same severity, it is not therefore abolished: although the punishment is not so striking to the senses, under the New Testament, it will not follow that it was therefore peculiar to the Old. Even admitting that this declaration, "The son " shall not bear the iniquity of the father," refers to the New Testament, it will not follow, that the threatening affixed to the second commandment is abrogated. For with equal propriety, accord-  
ing

ing to this rigid mode of interpretation, it might be inferred, that under this new dispensation no man's *own* sins shall be imputed to him: because it follows, "I will remember their sin no more." It might be argued with considerable appearance of truth, that if both expressions refer to the New Testament, both must respect the same persons; and that these are such only as are truly forgiven of God: and therefore that it no more proves that God will not punish the iniquities of fathers on their children, than it proves that he will not punish sin at all.

I shall only add, that Christ and his own prophets must certainly agree. What they say, therefore, must be understood in unison with his denunciation against the Jews, which we have already considered, that upon them should "come all the righteous blood shed on the earth." This visitation hath undoubtedly taken place during the new dispensation. And similar is the vengeance he hath denounced against Rome. Have we not seen it awfully executed in our own day? What idea can we form of the dreadful deluge of blood in a neighbouring country, but that it is the vengeance of JEHOVAH, the vengeance of his temple? If ever any people have had "blood to drink," this undoubtedly has been their portion. Had we exact registers of families, we should see, I am persuaded, the awful retributions of justice to succeeding generations, and the sins most legibly expressed in the circumstances of the punishment.

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This vengeance has eminently pursued the royal family. On the devoted head of an unfortunate prince, have the crimes of his fathers, and especially of that vain-glorious tyrant and cruel persecutor Louis XIV., been visited. "What," may it be said, "was he not less guilty, nay, a more amiable man, and a better prince, than the most of his predecessors?" We admit it. But such is the mysterious nature of the divine dispensation. The wicked Ahab was spared, and Jehoram suffered, who, although he wrought evil, did not do so "like his father, and like his mother." Jeroboam, that great transgressor, was suffered to die in peace; and the vengeance laid hold of his posterity, although not so infamous as he for personal iniquity. Let it be admitted, that the enemies of Louis had no right to take his life; this does not alter the character of the punishment, as proceeding from the Supreme Judge. It is perfectly consistent with his spotless holiness, to employ even "the wrath of man." He hath "created the waster to destroy." He, who raised up a Jehu against the house of Ahab, hath raised up wicked and bloodthirsty men as the instruments of his vengeance against the house of Bourbon. Louis XVI. did not shed the blood of the saints. He even manifested a spirit of toleration. But he was *not* humbled on account of that iniquity committed by his ancestors. Although he did not work evil like unto them, he "clave to the fins of Jeroboam," by retaining "the mark of the  
"beast."

“beast.” He adhered to the mother of harlots, and thus became a “partaker of her plagues.”

The vengeance of God hath also been eminently displayed against the clergy of France, who have, in former ages, been the great instigators and instruments of the persecution of the saints. As to them, there could not be a literal execution of the threatening. But God deals with societies as with families. As parents are perpetuated in their posterity, societies, as has already been seen, are viewed as still the same bodies, notwithstanding the change of individuals. God views successors as adopting the sins of those who have preceded them, and subjecting themselves to the deserved punishment; in as far as they adopt those very principles which have naturally produced such sins. Now, Popery is always the same. It is a religion that shall be overthrown, but can never be reformed. Whatever be the conduct or dispositions of individuals, the general character of her votaries is, that they “repent not of their deeds p.”

Parents, mark what a striking beacon is here set up to deter you from sin. Do you love the fruit of your body? Shew the sincerity of this love, by hating and avoiding sin; lest you subject your children to a judicial visitation from the righteous Judge. Are you eager to lay up treasure for them? Take heed that it be not a treasure of wrath. If you endeavour to accumulate wealth for their behoof, by unrighteous means,

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you

you indeed leave them a wretched inheritance. Are you shocked at the cruelty of those parents who of old devoted their children to the murderous Moloch? Tremble, lest you be found chargeable with cruelty still more fatal, as terminating in the destruction of their immortal souls.

What encouragement have you to love that gracious God, who “keepeth mercy for thousands!” Let your prayers daily reach the throne in behalf of your beloved children. Let them daily witness your holy conversation. Both may be blessed of God, as means of their eternal salvation. What comfort must it afford you, if you be instrumental in bringing them to the participation of that mercy which he extends to yourselves!

Let those, who are the children of wicked parents, avoid their evil example. Nor is this enough. The Lord requires of you, that you be humbled in his sight on account of their iniquities. He requires, that you should come to his throne with this language in your lips, as proceeding from the heart: “We have sinned  
“with our fathers.—We lie down in our shame,  
“and our confusion covereth us: for we have  
“sinned against the LORD our God, we and our  
“fathers, from our youth even unto this day,  
“and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our  
“God &c.”

SECT.



## SECTION VI.

*On the Destruction of the Nations of Canaan.—*

*Preliminary observations.—This Punishment consistent with Divine Justice.—Contained a signal display of Wisdom, and even of Goodness.—Objections answered.*

IT has been commonly urged by Deists, as a powerful argument against the truth of the Old Testament, that it is utterly inconceivable that God should enjoin the Israelites to exterminate the nations of Canaan. The idea, it has been said, is totally irreconcilable with divine justice, and with the other perfections of Deity. Hence it has been inferred, that God never gave any such command; and of consequence, that those writings, in which it is ascribed to him, must be a gross imposition upon mankind.

But let us attend to the primary fact. These nations were either destroyed, in part at least, by the Israelites, or they were not. It is scarcely supposable, that any will adopt the latter hypothesis. How can it otherwise be imagined, that the Israelites got possession of the country formerly belonging to the Canaanites? That the Israelites were not the first inhabitants, appears undeniable,

niable, not only from the constant acknowledgment of this people, but from various vestiges in profane history. Some of these have been formerly considered. Were it necessary, a variety of others might be produced. According to Procopius, a celebrated writer of the sixth century, many of the Girgashites, Jebusites, and other Canaanitish nations, settled at Tingis, now Tangier, in Africa. "There," he says, "nigh a large fountain, appear two pillars of white stone, having this inscription engraved on them in Phœnician characters, *We are those who fled from the face of Joshua, the son of Nave, the robber*<sup>r</sup>." Whatever may be thought of this inscription, his testimony with respect to Canaanites settling in that part of the country, is confirmed by different writers. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in Africa, testifies, that "if any of the boors in the neighbourhood of Hippo or Carthage was asked who he was, or of what country, he answered that he was a Canaanite<sup>s</sup>." Eusebius also asserts, that the Canaanites, who were routed by Joshua, led colonies into Africa, and settled at Tripoli<sup>t</sup>. Even Mela the geographer, who flourished in the reign of Claudius Cæsar, and who had been born in the neighbourhood of Tingis, admits that the Tingitanians were Phœnicians<sup>u</sup>. This I need scarcely say, was the name by which the inhabitants of Palestine were generally known among other nations. The Greek poet

<sup>r</sup> Vandalic. lib. 2.

<sup>s</sup> Ap. Bocharti Chanaan. lib. i. c. 24.

<sup>t</sup> Chron. lib. 2.

<sup>u</sup> Geog. lib. ii. c. 6.

poet Nonnus, from some authors whose works are now lost, assures us, that Cadmus the Phenician made a very successful expedition into these parts of Africa. "Philistus of Syracuse, a writer of good authority, who lived above three hundred and fifty years before Christ, relates, that the first traces of Carthage, were owing to Zorus and Charchedon, two Tyrians or Phenicians, thirty years before the destruction of Troy, according to Eusebius v."

If it be admitted that the Israelites destroyed or expelled the Canaanites, so as to get possession of the principal part of their land; to every candid inquirer, it will appear necessary to adopt the scriptural narrative of this conquest as the only true one. For, if this be rejected, it seems impossible to form any hypothesis on this subject that will even have the air of probability.

It cannot be supposed that the Israelites vanquished the Canaanites from their superior bravery or skill in the use of arms. For although every other nation hath discovered the greatest reluctance to renounce any portion of military glory, to which either in former or later times they could exhibit any claim, the Israelites have still ascribed their victories on this occasion to divine power. However zealous for the honour of their ancestors, they have said in all their succeeding generations; "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. How  
"thou

“ thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand,  
 “ and plantedst them ; how thou didst afflict the  
 “ people, and cast them out. For they got not  
 “ the land in possession by their own sword, nei-  
 “ ther did their own arm save them : but thy  
 “ right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy  
 “ countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto  
 “ them w.” Not one of their writers, in a single  
 instance, attempts to ingratiate himself with his  
 nation, by employing any other language. This  
 conduct, so directly contrary to that of every other  
 people, nay, to the fixed principles of human na-  
 ture, manifests the fullest and most impressible con-  
 viction of the truth of what they assert.

It is irrational, indeed, to suppose that the Is-  
 raelites should be equal to the Canaanites in mi-  
 litary power. The former, it is admitted on all  
 hands, were in a state of slavery in Egypt. The  
 Israelites themselves acknowledge, that they were  
 afraid to encounter the Canaanites, because they  
 were mightier than they ; that they murmured at  
 the report of the spies who were sent to view the  
 land ; that they refused to enter into it ; and  
 that on this account God destroyed them in the  
 wilderness.

No one, surely, will venture to assert, that the  
 Israelites overpowered the Canaanites in conse-  
 quence of their superiority as to numbers. An  
 undisciplined multitude could have done little a-  
 gainst a variety of nations so inured to war, as to  
 have chariots of iron, and, according to the strong  
 metaphors

metaphors commonly used in the languages of the East, "cities walled to heaven." But so far were the Israelites from surpassing their enemies in number, that they bore no proportion to them in this respect.

It has been foolishly said, that "we read in the "books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, &c. that the "Israelites came by *stealth* upon whole nations of "people." But nothing of this nature is said in any of these books. Nor was it possible that "whole nations of people" could have been overcome by the Israelites in this manner. Had they succeeded in subduing one city or one nation by stealth, the rest would undoubtedly have taken the alarm, and prepared to defend themselves.

As it thus appears that the Israelites could not be indebted, for their conquest of Canaan, to superiority in military prowess, or in numbers, or to any successful stratagem; and that they have still ascribed it to the power of God; it follows that the account given in Scripture of this conquest cannot be reasonably rejected. We have formerly considered the preservation of the Gibeonites to a late period in the Jewish history, as a standing testimony of the truth of those wonderful facts which are recorded in the books of Moses and Joshua. Their preservation may particularly be viewed as a striking proof that the Israelites acted by the authority of God in destroying the Canaanites; as they formed a part of one of the seven nations said to be devoted to destruction.

Before



Before particularly entering on the consideration of the objections made to this part of the Sacred History, I shall premise a few things, which may tend to rescue this injunction from the false and invidious light in which it has been exhibited.

First, This destruction was amply *merited*. The crimes of the devoted nations were very heinous. Adultery, incest, sodomy, and bestiality prevailed among them. They not only worshipped a great multitude of strange gods, but offered human sacrifices. In the blindness and cruelty of their idolatry, they sacrificed their own children <sup>y</sup>. Their crimes were highly aggravated. It would seem that they had rapidly corrupted themselves. So late as the period of Abraham's sojourning in Canaan, many of its inhabitants appear to have worshipped the true God. Among these we may reckon, not only Melchizedek king of Salem, but Abimelech king of Gerar <sup>z</sup>. It is natural to think that their people adhered to the same worship. They had enjoyed many mercies. Abraham, Lot, Isaac and Jacob sojourned among them. They had the benefit of their example, instructions and reproofs. These patriarchs frequently changed their situation. This might be ordered in Providence, not merely to remind themselves that they were only pilgrims, but that the benefit already mentioned might be more extensively diffused among the inhabitants of that country.

But

<sup>y</sup> Lev. xviii. 3. 6....24.

[<sup>z</sup> Gen. xx. 4. 9.

But they despised their mercy. Nor did they take warning from ~~the~~ awful punishment of the cities of the plain, although this punishment was inflicted for the commission of a crime common among themselves. God exercised his long-suffering towards some of these nations for more than four centuries, after they were greatly corrupted. He would not cast them out of Canaan, till their *iniquity* was *full*, not even to make way for the seed of Abraham <sup>a</sup>.

Secondly, This destruction was *limited*. The Israelites had no authority to destroy any of the heathen nations, except those seven particularly mentioned. They were to offer peace to others, and could only make them tributaries <sup>b</sup>. The inoffensive conduct of the Israelites, indeed, to several other nations, affords a strong collateral proof that they acted under a divine command in what they did to the seven nations of Canaan. Can it be accounted for on natural principles, that they should have quietly passed by other nations, whom they could as easily have conquered, as far as natural strength was concerned, nay more easily; nations, for whom they had no partiality; from whom indeed they had received such provocation, as is generally reckoned a sufficient reason for hostility; whereas the Canaanites had done them no injury whatsoever? Were the Israelites so bloody a race; and how did they spare the Moabites and Ammonites, who not only refused them a passage through their land <sup>c</sup>, but hired Balaam

<sup>a</sup> Gen. xv. 16.<sup>b</sup> Deut. xx. 10, 11.<sup>c</sup> Judg. xi. 17.

Balaam to curse them<sup>d</sup>? Whence did they discover no inclination to avenge themselves on the children of Edom, although the latter would not suffer them to pass through their territories, where they offered to pay for every thing they needed; and even came out against them in a hostile manner<sup>e</sup>? These circumstances are totally irreconcilable, not merely with the character given to the Israelites by the enemies of religion, but with their conduct towards the Canaanites; unless we receive the solution given in their own scriptures, that they acted under the influence of a prohibition in the one case, and obeyed an express command in the other. No provocation could give them a warrant to injure these nations. For God had said; “ Distress not the Moabites, neither  
 “ contend with them in battle: for I will not  
 “ give thee of their land for a possession, because  
 “ I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a  
 “ possession.—Thou art to pass through Ar, the  
 “ coast of Moab this day. And when thou co-  
 “ mest nigh over against the children of Ammon,  
 “ distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I  
 “ will not give thee of the land of the children  
 “ of Ammon any possession, because I have given  
 “ it unto the children of Lot for a possession<sup>f</sup>.”  
 They had received similar instructions with respect to Edom. The Lord said to Moses, “ Com-  
 “ mand thou the people, saying, Ye are to pass  
 “ through the coast of your brethren the children  
 “ of Esau, which dwell in Seir, and they shall be  
 “ afraid

d Deut. xxiii. 4.

e Numb. xx. 14.—21.

f Deut. ii. 9. 17.—19.

“ afraid of you : take ye good heed unto your-  
 “ selves therefore. Meddle not with them ; for  
 “ I will not give you of their land, no not so  
 “ much as a foot-breadth, because I have given  
 “ Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession. Ye shall  
 “ buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat ;  
 “ and ye shall also buy water of them for money,  
 “ that ye may drink <sup>g</sup>.” Whence the difference  
 of their conduct to Sihon king of the Amorites ?  
 They sent the same message to him, when on  
 their way to Canaan, which they had sent to the  
 kings of Moab and Edom. Sihon did nothing  
 more than these other kings had done. He refused  
 to suffer the Israelites to pass through his land,  
 and came out against them to battle. He even  
 did less than the king of Moab. He used no di-  
 vinations against them. But he and all his people  
 were destroyed. We can account for this dif-  
 ference no other way, than by believing that the  
 Israelites were restrained by a divine prohibition  
 in the one case, but not in the other.

Thirdly, This destruction was to be *gradual*.  
 Hence Moses said to the Israelites, concerning the  
 devoted nations ; “ The LORD thy God will put  
 “ out those nations before thee, by little and lit-  
 “ tle : thou mayest not consume them at once,  
 “ lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee <sup>h</sup>.”  
 Here we observe a trait of mercy not merely to  
 the Israelites, but to the Canaanites. Thus, an  
 opportunity was left them to flee out of the land,  
 if they chose. For it would seem that the threat-  
 VOL. II. L ened

g Deut. ii. 4.—6.

h Deut. vii. 22.

ened destruction did not necessarily imply a total extirpation of all the individuals, but might be viewed as truly accomplished with respect to all who were *driven out* of the land of promise in whatever way. In consequence of the gradual execution of the sentence, time was also left to individuals to consider the wonderful works of the true God: and it would seem, that if they repented and forsook their idolatry, they would be spared and admitted into communion with the Church, in the same manner with Rahab and her father's family.

In a word, all the cities and nations, which the Israelites destroyed, *appeared in arms* against them. Not one of them made any overtures for peace, or testified a wish for it. “There was not a city  
“that made peace with the children of Israel,  
“save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon: all  
“other they took in battle. For it was of the  
“LORD to harden their hearts, that they should  
“come against Israel in battle, that he might de-  
“stroy them utterly, that they might have no fa-  
“vour, but that he might destroy them, as the  
“LORD commanded Moses<sup>i</sup>.” Let us take the different parts of the narrative in connexion. They “heard how the LORD had dried up the wa-  
“ter of the Red Sea for” the Israelites<sup>k</sup>, how he had “dried up the waters of Jordan from before  
“them<sup>l</sup>,” and knew what had happened to Jericho<sup>m</sup>. As they could not doubt the truth of these miracles, one would naturally suppose that  
they

<sup>i</sup> Josh. xi. 19, 20.

<sup>k</sup> Josh. ii. 10.

<sup>l</sup> Josh. v. 1.

<sup>m</sup> Josh. x. 3.



they would have imitated the conduct of the Gibeonites, and tried at least if the same mercy would be extended to them. But so far was this from being the case, that a number of the kings of Canaan were so exasperated against the Gibeonites for accepting of peace with Israel, as to join their forces for the express purpose of destroying them. The king of Jerusalem sent to the rest, saying ; “ Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon ; for it hath made peace with Joshua, and with the children of Israel.” Greater obduracy, or more inveterate enmity, can hardly be conceived. Thus they were ripened for destruction. Their destruction indeed is immediately ascribed to their obduracy. The reason given for their resistance is, that “ it was of the LORD to harden their hearts,—that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them,” that is, God in righteous judgment gave them up to hardness of heart, as a punishment of their former guilt, and as a preparative for a still greater punishment<sup>a</sup>.

Let no one say, “ If God had devoted them to destruction, they would certainly have been destroyed, whether they had hardened themselves or not. Supposing such a purpose, any application for mercy would have been unavailing.” No one has a right to speak in this manner. We may safely assert the contrary. For such is the inseparable connexion between the purpose itself, and all the circumstances leading to the exe-

L 2

cution

<sup>a</sup> Josh. x. 4.

cution of it, that it is just as easy to suppose the failure of the purpose, as the want of one of these circumstances. It is clear from the event, that these nations could not have been destroyed, had they not hardened themselves against God and his people. For we are certain that they did thus harden themselves, before they were destroyed ; and therefore we no less certainly conclude that God predetermined their destruction only in this way. When we are informed that they were given up of God to this astonishing obduracy,—“ that they might have no favour, but that he “ might destroy them ;” it is evident not only that their obduracy was the crowning part of their guilt, and that which immediately procured their destruction ; but that he denied them favour, only as obdurate in their wickedness. Could we for a moment suppose any circumstance different from what must have been pre-ordained ; we might safely infer from the language used, that they would have “ had favour,” had they not hardened themselves, and “ come against Israel in battle.” This may be illustrated from the example of the Gibeonites. They belonged to one of these nations. But they hardened not themselves, so as to war against Israel ; and they obtained favour. The deceitful means which they employed, and the error of Joshua and the princes in not asking counsel of God, affect not the argument. It is clear from the event, not only that God had determined that they should not be destroyed, but that he had determined that their submission should

should be the immediate mean of their preservation. He, who can bring good out of evil, overruled their falsehood and the oversight of the leaders, for the accomplishment of his own purpose of mercy. The contrast which we have, in the words above quoted, between the conduct of the Gibeonites and that of the other nations, affords no inconsiderable evidence that God, in his purpose, had no less certainly connected the preservation of the former with their submission, than the destruction of the latter with their obduracy.

1. We now proceed to vindicate the *justice* of God in the destruction of these nations. Their crimes, as we have seen, were of the deepest dye. He must be "worse than an infidel," who will deny that such crimes merit punishment. Were wicked nations suffered to escape with impunity, how could it appear that there was "a God who judged in the earth?" It is necessary that crimes, which may properly be called national, should be punished in time; because men, although existing individually, have no national existence in the eternal state. The crimes of the Canaanites were not only great, but, as we have also seen, highly aggravated; and they had arrived at such a pitch of obduracy, that they paid no respect to the most astonishing miracles. Their "iniquity was full." The honour of divine justice required that their crimes should be signally punished. Their fate, accordingly, not

L 3

only

only exhibited to the surrounding nations an awful example of the necessary connexion between sin and punishment, but still conveys to us the same important lesson. It is, at the same time, a most striking emblem of the tremendous punishment of the finally unbelieving ; and awfully prefigures the justice of God in the everlasting destruction of all who refuse to ask peace of the true Joshua, who continue in arms against him. Those only who are brought to enter into a league with him, to enter into his covenant, can be delivered from this destruction.

As the justice of God demands the punishment of transgressors ; from his essential *sovereignty*, he hath an unquestionable right to inflict punishment in whatever way he pleases. Many, who deny the truth of revelation, admit that God maintains his moral government of the world by bringing temporal calamities on the wicked. They acknowledge that famine, pestilence and the sword, are arrows in his quiver. If it be granted that the desolations of war are the tokens of divine vengeance, and that God overrules these for the accomplishment of his purposes ; it is impossible to prove that he might not actually give a commission to one people to execute the sentence of his wrath against another. Deists themselves admit that “ God can, if he pleases, communicate “ his will to man °.” If he employ the inanimate and irrational creatures in fulfilling his vengeance, it is nowise repugnant to reason to suppose

pose that he may employ rational creatures in the same work, in conformity to their superior powers, by expressly communicating to them his will. He who causes stormy winds and noisome vapours, earthquakes and volcanoes, to “fulfil the “voice of his word,” hath an equal right to employ rational creatures for similar purposes. It is reasonable to suppose that he will employ such agents, when this method can be more subservient to his designs than the operation of passive instruments. That this was the case in the instance under consideration, will appear afterwards.

Let it be observed in the mean time, that although the Scripture represents the Israelites as instruments, it still exhibits the work as God's. Thus he says to his people; “I will destroy all “the people to whom thou shalt come <sup>p</sup>.” “The “LORD thy God shall deliver them unto thee, “and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed <sup>q</sup>.” Here not only does the Supreme Judge appear, as passing sentence on a guilty people, over whom he had the most unquestionable dominion, and delivering them into the hands of another people as the executioners of his sentence; but as supernaturally enabling them, contrary to all human grounds of expectation, to fulfil his orders. And what is there, in this, repugnant either to justice or to reason?

L 4

The

<sup>p</sup> Exod. xxiij. 27.

<sup>q</sup> Deut. vii. 23.



The circumstance of which the enemies of revelation have made the greatest handle, is that of children being involved in the common destruction. This idea, it must be acknowledged, is revolting to our feelings as men. To natural reason it may also seem irreconcilable with divine justice. But it is not really so. Every one, who denies not a Providence, must admit that God visits with death those who have never actually transgressed his law. A great part of mankind die in infancy. Now, death is either a mercy or a punishment. If a mercy to children, as some pretend, because it delivers them from the evils of life; its nature cannot be changed by the manner in which it comes. Death, as ultimately proceeding from the hand of God, must be as really a mercy, when caused by the destroying sword, as when it is the consequence of a fever or pestilence. The bulk of men, however, will consider it as a punishment. That it is so, even to infants, appears from the severe sufferings to which they are often subjected before death. Both feeling and reason protest against the absurdity of viewing this as in itself a blessing. If, then, death be a punishment, the subjects of it must be viewed by God as guilty. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" God cannot afflict the innocent. The word of revelation can alone enable us to solve this problem. Those, who consider death as a punishment, must, in order to be consistent, either deny a Providence, or accede to the testimony of Scripture, when it informs us, that "in  
" Adam

“Adam all die;” because “all have sinned in him” as a federal head.

The idea of God’s giving a command to the Israelites to destroy the children of the Canaanites, is not more inconsistent with his justice, than that of his giving a similar command to any mortal malady. For no individual can die, without an act of the will of that God in whom we live. Such an exit, although more repugnant to our feelings, would be attended with far less suffering than death generally is in a natural way. By involving the children, then, in a common destruction with their parents, it would appear, that God meant to give to mankind an awful display of his justice in the punishment of sin, even in those who had no actual guilt. The Israelites lived under a symbolical dispensation: and this destruction was to them a striking symbol of the evil and demerit of original sin. It conveys the same important lesson to us. And doubtless, such a general, sudden and violent excision teaches this important doctrine, in a far more affecting manner than the progressive death of individuals, according to the ordinary course of our fallen nature.

II. Not only was it consistent with the justice of God to punish these guilty nations, by employing another people as his instruments; but if we examine the subject further, it will appear that he signally displayed his *wisdom* in adopting this method.

He

He could not more effectually testify, to the surrounding nations, his hatred of sin ; and particularly of those heinous iniquities by which they were defiled, in common with the Canaanites. Had he employed famine or pestilence, or suffered them to be wasted in the common course of war, the nations around might have ascribed their fate merely to second causes. But when he employed another people as the instruments of his indignation, and attested their commission by unquestionable miracles, the neighbouring heathen had the fullest evidence of a divine hand. They were doubtless convinced of this, although they continued in their obduracy. They had the same opportunity of knowing the great events which had already happened, as the Gibeonites, who had “ heard the fame of the LORD God, and all “ that he did in Egypt,” as well as that he had “ commanded his servant Moses—to destroy all “ the inhabitants of the land” of Canaan<sup>r</sup>.

In respect of the Israelites, this destruction was designed as a preventive, both of sin and of punishment. God had chosen them to be an holy people to himself. Now, we cannot conceive a more proper plan for impressing their minds with a sense of the hatefulness of sin in general, and particularly of the enormities of the Canaanites, than that of employing them as the ministers of his justice. By their obedience in this respect, the Israelites became witnesses against themselves, if they should ever transgress in a similar way.

They

They rendered themselves quite inexcusable ; and practically vindicated the justice of God, should he afterwards punish them in the same manner, for imitating the wicked example of the devoted nations. The Israelites are commanded to destroy these nations, lest they should prove a *snare* to them, in respect of *sin*. Thus it is said, “ Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee. But ye shall destroy their altars ;—lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice<sup>s</sup>.” The necessity of this destruction is also enjoined, from this consideration, that the Canaanites, if spared, would eventually prove a snare with respect to *punishment*.—This shall be illustrated afterwards.

III. This command, therefore, although at first view it may seem to bear no other character than that of awful severity, contains a display of *goodness*. We consider it merely in a partial light, unless we view it in connexion with the great and merciful design of God, in setting apart the Israelites as a peculiar people, for the preservation of divine truth, when it had perished among other nations. Both the wisdom and goodness of God required, that he should employ the most proper means for preserving this people from becoming  
so

<sup>s</sup> Exod. xxxiv. 12. 15.

so corrupt as to lose the testimony he had given them. Had he pleased, he could have brought the Canaanites to embrace the truth. But this was inconsistent with his great law under the law, which was to separate one people from every other, as the depositaries of revelation. Now, had the Israelites been permitted to dwell among the heathen inhabitants of Canaan; in consequence of the strong bias in the heart to error and wickedness, the Israelites would soon have become as gross as the Canaanites themselves. Hence the preservation of the true religion is given as the reason of the commanded destruction: "Thou shalt utterly destroy them,—that they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods: so should ye sin against the LORD your God?"

Thus, besides the interest that divine justice had in the destruction of this guilty people, God enjoined it on the Israelites on the ground of self-defence. They would certainly expose themselves to the loss of temporal life, by sparing the Canaanites. For in consequence of following their example, they would provoke the LORD to destroy them. Therefore he thus warned them by Moses; "If thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day, that ye shall utterly perish. As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish." Not only should their

temporal



temporal life be in danger, but the life of their souls. By forsaking the true God, and worshipping idols, they would expose themselves to eternal destruction.

Tenderness to children is a motive which has great influence on parents. In this respect, the severity of the dispensation towards the Canaanites, as extending to their children, was undoubtedly meant for the instruction and warning of the Israelites. The sin of that people was clearly written in the nature of their punishment. From the dreadful influence of false religion, they had embued their hands in the blood of their children. They had sacrificed them to their idols; and in righteous judgment, “the LORD hath a sacrifice<sup>u</sup>,” in which parents and children share a common fate. Thus the Israelites were forewarned, that if they apostatized from God, they would subject, not themselves only, but their beloved offspring, to destruction. This dispensation was a practical commentary on the threatening he had pronounced by Moses, with respect to the consequence of disobedience: “The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of grey-hairs<sup>v</sup>.” He uses a similar argument with his people in the days of Jeremiah: “Wherefore commit ye this great evil against your souls, to cut off from you man and woman, child and suckling out of Judah, to leave you none to remain; in that ye provoke  
“ me

<sup>u</sup> Isa. xxxiv. 6.

<sup>v</sup> Deut. xxxii. 25.

“ me unto wrath with the works of your hands,  
“ burning incense unto other gods w ? ”

I have no doubt that the destruction of these nations was commanded by God, as an antidote to a greater evil, even in a natural point of view. Had this command been obeyed, it is highly probable that it would eventually have proved a mean of preserving more lives. For even in this case it can hardly be supposed, that there would have been so great an expence of life, as there was in succeeding generations ; in the impious sacrifices of children, not by Canaanites only, but by the Israelites, imitating their example ; in the bloody wars between these nations ; and in the desolating judgments inflicted by God on his own people, because of their conformity to the heathen among whom they dwelt.

The event, indeed, illustrated both the wisdom and the goodness of God in giving this command to Israel. They disobeyed it in sparing many of the Canaanites. These proved a snare to them, and caused the continuance and propagation of the most abominable crimes, on account of which the Israelites were subjected to the most severe punishments. The true religion was never altogether lost : but it often seemed to be nearly so. A very few years after the death of Joshua, in consequence of *dwelling among* the nations whose destruction God had commanded, the Israelites “ took their daughters to be their wives,  
“ and gave their daughters to their sons, and ser-  
“ ved

“ved their gods ;” so that “the anger of the  
 “LORD was hot against them x.” The Church of  
 Israel, when, in a time of reformation, confessing  
 her guilt and punishment, traces both to this pri-  
 mary act of disobedience to the command of God.  
 “They did not destroy the nations, concerning  
 “whom the LORD commanded them : but were  
 “mingled among the heathen, and learned their  
 “works. And they served their idols ; which  
 “were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed  
 “their sons and their daughters unto devils ; and  
 “shed innocent blood, even the blood of their  
 “sons and of their daughters, whom they sacri-  
 “ficed unto the idols of Canaan : and the land  
 “was polluted with blood.—Therefore was the  
 “wrath of the LORD kindled against his people,  
 “inasmuch that he abhorred his own inheritance.  
 “And he gave them into the hand of the hea-  
 “then ; and they that hated them ruled over  
 “them y.”

It has been objected, that “it is inconceivable  
 “that God should ever have given such a com-  
 “mand to the Israelites ; as its natural tendency  
 “must have been to blunt every finer feeling in  
 “their hearts, and to render them sanguinary and  
 “cruel.”

In reply to this objection, a variety of consider-  
 ations claim our attention. We are to consider  
 the nature of that dispensation under which the  
 Israelites lived. It was a dispensation of terror.

God

x Judg. iii. 5.—6.

y Psal. cv<sup>4</sup> 34.—41.

God in his infinite wisdom adapted the dispensation to the state of society in general, and to the national character of the Israelites. The nations of the earth were universally depraved to a very high degree. The Israelites themselves were a stubborn and a rebellious people. That peculiar dispensation, which he gave them, was especially meant for the restraint of transgression. From the abounding of wickedness among the surrounding nations, from the character of the Israelites themselves, and from the comparatively small degree of light which they enjoyed, strong measures became necessary. The more gentle means employed by Providence under the gospel, when light is more generally diffused, would have been inadequate in that period. "Life and immortality" were not yet "brought to light." The evidence of an eternal state, although not entirely withheld, was comparatively obscure. Hence, rewards and punishments of a temporal nature, were the most prominent features of the dispensation of the law. It was therefore necessary, that these should be striking, in proportion to the obscurity which prevailed with respect to the eternal world. It was necessary that not only the heathen nations, but the peculiar people of God, should be deterred from sin by the most signal displays of God's displeasure in temporal punishment. "Even the heir," while in a state of minority, was treated as "a bond-servant." There is now far less occasion for such severity; as, besides the superior light of the gospel, God hath given us the greatest

est possible evidence of his hatred of sin, and displeasure on account of it, in the sufferings of his own eternal Son, as the Surety of his people.

The same objection may be brought, although on a smaller scale, against any great display of justice among men. It would be impossible to support civil society without punishments, and in many cases without severe ones. It has been seen, that, according to Scripture, the destruction of the Canaanites was a signal act of divine justice, and that it was meant for the prevention both of sin and of punishment. It was not intended, like the execution of human laws, merely for exciting terror in the hearts of individuals, or for warning a single nation ; but as an awful example to many surrounding nations. It was an example, that, in its extent, bore some analogy to the extent of that kingdom, which "ruleth over all." This act of justice, however tremendous, was necessary. The nations of Canaan were incorrigible in their sins. When wickedness comes to a certain pitch, it seems requisite, for the maintenance of God's moral government, that he should manifest his displeasure by judgments of so remarkable a nature, as plainly to declare the hand of God to the most ignorant and indifferent. That mercy, which prevents the execution of necessary acts of justice, deserves not the name of mercy. It is in fact cruelty. For it eventually proves an encouragement to sin, not only to the individuals who are spared, but to myriads besides.



It is unfair indeed to reason merely from the supposable consequences of such a command. But if men will reason in this way, the proper question is; Whether, upon the whole, the morals of the Israelites were more in danger of suffering from their execution of such a sentence, or from observing the impunity of the Canaanites? This question admits of an easy answer. The objection is made to the command, from the idea of its eventually affecting one branch of morals only. But had the Canaanites been spared, the whole system of morals would have suffered. God knew that the Israelites would soon become as corrupt as the nations among whom they dwelt. From the impunity of the Canaanites, they would have had too much ground to promise themselves a similar exemption, and to regard all the threatenings of their law as mere bugbears.

It may be said, that if it was necessary, God could have destroyed the Canaanites, without employing the Israelites in this work. But thus the dispensation could not have had the same awful language, either to the Israelites, or to the heathen around. Had ordinary means been employed, the heathen might have ascribed the destruction to their own offended deities.

There is every reason to believe, that the preservation of the Canaanites would have had a far worse effect on the Israelites, even with respect to humanity, than their destruction could have. For they would soon have imitated the wicked example of these nations in its full extent. Their  
hearts

hearts would soon have been hardened, not only by the horrid influence of human sacrifices, but by that of unnatural lusts. These, it is well known, have a brutifying power on the mind of man, and render it callous to all the more generous feelings of our nature. The effect of such abominable practices must necessarily have been permanent, because they would have been continued from generation to generation. But whatever effect the extermination of the Canaanites may be supposed to have had on the immediate agents, its influence could not be so durable; because the command was limited, and the destruction of consequence only temporary.

We are still to consider the Israelites, as, in the whole of their obedience to this command, called immediately to view the authority of the Supreme Judge, who manifested his presence by a continuation of miracles. For we cannot form a right estimate concerning this command, unless we consider it in its connexion. Now, there was no room left for the exercise of their own corrupt passions. They were to act merely as the ministers of divine justice. Such is the perverseness of our nature, that the very idea of an absolute command being interposed about any thing, makes that work ungrateful which might otherwise be agreeable. That God, who infinitely well knows all the secret springs of action in the human heart, knew that the Israelites, when required to destroy the devoted nations, as an indispensable duty, would be reluctant to the work, and soon slacken

in their obedience. That they did so, appears from the history. There is not the least evidence that they contracted a sanguinary disposition, in consequence of their partial execution of the divine sentence. In as far as cruelty could be viewed as a trait in their national character, it originated in their imitation of the Canaanites, and must therefore be considered rather as the consequence of sparing that people. It was only from their being "mingled among the heathen, and "learning their works," that they "shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and "daughters<sup>2</sup>."

That such a command would necessarily tend to make the Israelites cruel, is an insufficient argument against its reality, because it proves too much. For, admitting that they, in the whole execution of this sentence, were bound to have their eye immediately directed to the authority of the Supreme Judge; if their obedience tended to harden their hearts, the very observation of God's conduct in providence must have a similar influence on his rational creatures. For we see innumerable calamities brought on the human race, and extending even to those who have never sinned personally. Now, it must either be denied that these are the effects of providential operation, and of consequence that God ruleth among men; or it must be granted that the objection under consideration is a bad one. For what difference soever may be supposed as to degree, the persuasion

sion of God's intervention by a positive *precept*, cannot, as to its tendency with respect to us, differ essentially from the persuasion of his operation in *fact*.

The destruction commanded is never represented as a pattern for their general conduct, but still as something peculiar and extraordinary. It is called "a terrible thing <sup>a</sup>." They were to view the seven nations as actually accursed of God. Their very goods were accursed, and subjected those who should take possession of them to a curse <sup>b</sup>. In the destruction of these nations, the Israelites were not called to work by themselves. They were called to be "workers with God." He claims the work of "cutting off the Canaan-  
"ites <sup>c</sup>." He did every thing that could be done to convince his people that these nations were irrecoverably devoted. He sent destroying insects before them <sup>d</sup>. He made the walls of Jericho miraculously to fall to the ground, in consequence of the blowing of horns. He made the sun to stand still, and he "cast down great stones from heaven" on the Canaanites <sup>e</sup>.

The Israelites, as has been formerly observed, were not permitted to view any of the other heathen nations around in the same light. They were to offer peace to them; and even although they refused it, and reduced the Israelites to take their cities by storm, they were not permitted to kill any but the grown males, that is, such as

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bore

<sup>a</sup> Exod. xxxiv. 10.<sup>b</sup> Josh. vii. 12, 13. 15.<sup>c</sup> Exod. xxiii. 23.<sup>d</sup> Deut. vii. 20.; Josh. xxiv. 12.<sup>e</sup> Josh. x. 10.—13.

bore arms against them. For then, every man, who was able to carry arms, was a soldier, especially during a siege.

In a word, this command could not have the effect of making the Israelites cruel, because any abuse of it in this way was prevented by many precepts of a tendency directly contrary, which were bound on them by the same authority. We find no ancient laws so favourable to the interests of humanity as those of the Jews. They were to bring back their enemy's ass, if they saw him go astray, and to relieve him, if they saw him lying under his burden<sup>f</sup>. They were forbidden to retain the pledge of a poor man for a single night<sup>g</sup>. Nor were they to confine these acts of humanity to their own nation. They were prohibited from injuring the Edomites, Moabites and Ammonites, notwithstanding all their unkindness. They were not to "abhor an Edomite," because of their consanguinity in their common parent Isaac; nor to "abhor an Egyptian," because they were strangers in his land<sup>h</sup>. Here there was no room left for the diabolical principle of revenge. They were even commanded to "love the strangers as themselves<sup>i</sup>:" and this character extended to all those of other nations, who resided among them, the Canaanites excepted; although they did not conform to the rites of the Jewish religion. These, and many other precepts of a similar tendency, they were bound to obey,

<sup>f</sup> Exod. xxiii. 4, 5.

<sup>g</sup> Deut. xxiv. 10.—13,

<sup>h</sup> Deut. xxiii. 7.

<sup>i</sup> Lev. xix. 34.



obey, under peril of being given up of God to such judgments as were brought by their instrumentality on the devoted nations. Nor did these threatenings fall to the ground. Saul's cruelty to the Gibeonites, after they had been received into a state of friendship with Israel, was severely punished, both on the nation, and on his own family.

One, who has lately professed to elucidate the Holy Scriptures, by a new Translation, has avowed that the only solution that can be given of the difficulty arising from the command to exterminate the Canaanites, is "to acknowledge, fairly and openly, that the Jewish historians, both here and in many other places, put in the mouth of the LORD words, which he never spake; and assign to him views and motives, which he never had."

This is indeed to cut the Gordian knot; and, although he pretends the contrary, to unhinge the whole system of inspiration.

The objection, for removing which he reckons it necessary to make so strange a concession, is founded on a supposed inconsistency in the divine conduct, according to the account given in sacred history. "The assertion," he says, "that God, after giving so explicit a precept, and ordering the Chanaanites to be extirpated, that they might not become a snare to his people, should yet purposely reserve so great a number of those same Chanaanites, to be a snare, seems to affect both

“ his wisdom and veracity.—If I be commanded  
 “ to destroy or remove the cause of temptation,  
 “ lest I should yield to it ; and *at the same time*  
 “ be told that I can neither remove nor destroy  
 “ it ; nay, that it is purposely left to tempt me ; I  
 “ must doubt of the equity or the truth of the  
 “ tale.—Could the God of truth and wisdom say  
 “ to the Israelites : “ Destroy those idolatrous na-  
 “ tions, lest they seduce you into idolatry ;” and  
 “ yet purposely reserve them, to try whether the  
 “ Israelites would be seduced.”—“ I cannot bring  
 “ myself,” he also says, “ to believe that such an  
 “ order proceeded from the mouth of God ; per-  
 “ haps not even from the mouth of Moses. I am  
 “ rather willing to suspect, that it is the fabrica-  
 “ tion of some posterior Jew, to justify the cruel-  
 “ ties of his nation <sup>k</sup>.”

It is evident that this objection especially rests on a *fallacy* in the interpretation of the word *snare*. This learned writer uses it, as if it invariably signified a *temptation* to sin, or *cause* of temptation. It would, indeed, be difficult to prove, that it is inconsistent with the perfections of God, judicially to leave some things in the way of sinners, which, he knows will, through their own depravity, prove occasions of temptation. This is what he threatens, as the punishment of previous transgression. But although, as has been seen, the word *snare* sometimes denotes that which proves a temptation, it properly and principally signifies the cause of destruction ; and  
 in

<sup>k</sup> Geddes's Transl. of the Bible, Vol. II. Pref. ii.

in all the places where it is used in relation to the point under consideration, it has either an immediate or an ultimate reference to the punishment of sin. The punishment, as denoted by this word, is sometimes expressly distinguished from the sin : “ They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me : for if thou serve other gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee <sup>l</sup>.” Here the sin, and the snare, are mentioned distinctly ; the latter, as denoting the punishment, and the former, its procuring cause. For it is undeniable, that the sin meant is that of “ serving their gods ;” and this sin, it is said, “ will surely be a snare,” because it would certainly expose them to punishment. To the same purpose, are the following words : “ Thine eye shall have no pity upon them : neither shalt thou serve their gods ; for that will be a snare unto thee <sup>m</sup>.” It is not meant that the service of their gods could be a “ cause of temptation ;” because this is pointed out as itself the sin, or compliance with the temptation, and so the cause of punishment. In the same sense the Egyptians said that Moses was a snare to them ; as being the cause of their destruction <sup>n</sup>.

Here, also, a *false* representation is given of the matter of *fact*. God did *not* command the Israelites to destroy or remove the cause of temptation, lest they should yield to it ; and *at the same time* tell them, that they could neither remove nor destroy it, but that it was purposely left to

<sup>l</sup> Exod. xxiii. 33.

<sup>m</sup> Deut. vii. 16.

<sup>n</sup> Exod. x. 7. See also

<sup>r</sup> Sam. xviii. 21.

to tempt them. The objector, whether intentionally or not, I will not presume to say, confounds things with respect to *time*, which are kept totally distinct in the thread of the narrative. The Israelites were not informed, that the Canaanites were to be left for their punishment, till more than sixty years after they received the command to destroy them.

There is nothing here that can in any degree militate against the *veracity* of God. The precept was delivered, on their entry into the wilderness, as pointing out their duty; the declaration referred to was made, many years afterwards, as expressing God's displeasure with them, because of their neglect of duty, and the punishment to which, on this account, they were to be subjected.

Nor was it inconsistent with the veracity of God, to give an express command to his people, with respect to what they should do, and even *at the same time* to purpose in his own mind, that the event should be different. For the secret purpose of God was never intended as the rule of our duty. This is the very doctrine that Moses taught the Israelites, with respect to a similar judgment, that might afterwards be inflicted on them, in their being "rooted out of the land," like the nations that were before them. "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do

“do all the words of this law<sup>n</sup>.” The will of God’s purpose is often very different from that of his precept, which is the only rule of our duty. It was the will of God’s precept, inculcated on the Israelites for many centuries, and repeated in a great variety of forms, and by many messengers, that when the Messiah should appear, they should hear him in all things. This was enjoined on them under the severest penalties. Yet we are equally certain, that it was the will of his purpose, that they should crucify him. Therefore said the apostle Peter; “Him being delivered by the *determinate counsel* and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain<sup>o</sup>.”

Although he actually reserved these nations for the punishment of his people, there was nothing in this inconsistent with his veracity. On the contrary, in this very manner was his veracity displayed. Whatever may be thought by selfish man, who views the divine conduct merely as it regards the creature; God finds his honour no less concerned in verifying his threatening, than in fulfilling his promise. When he commanded the Israelites to exterminate the Canaanites, he did not tell them, indeed, that he had immutably purposed that this should not be the case. But he *at the same time* warned them of the danger of disobedience. He said; “Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land,—lest it be for a snare in the midst  
“ of

<sup>n</sup> Deut. xxix. 28, 29.

<sup>o</sup> Acts ii. 23.



“of thee <sup>p</sup>.” He expressly threatened, that this should eventually be a snare, as subjecting them to the deserved punishment; as in a passage formerly quoted, “It will surely be a snare unto “thee <sup>q</sup>.” When, therefore, he afterwards spared these nations, it was an illustration of his veracity, in the fulfilment of the threatening.

The whole conduct ascribed to God in this matter, was not less consistent with divine *wisdom*. His judgments are so mysterious, that we cannot pretend fully to explain them. But so much is clearly made known, that Wisdom must be “justified of all her children.” God had indeed determined, that these nations should not be totally exterminated, even before he gave the command to Israel to execute his vengeance. But he had determined this, only in a certain connexion; as what should eventually prove the just punishment of Israel’s disobedience. It is one of the modes adopted by infinite wisdom, in the ordinary course of providential dispensation, to make the punishment of the sinner to arise from his sin, or from that which hath been the occasion of it. Thus it is said; “Thine own wickedness “shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall re-  
“prove thee <sup>r</sup>.” We cannot conceive that sin could be punished in any way, more to the honour of divine wisdom. For as, in this manner, God manifests that, notwithstanding the atheistical suggestions of the heart, he marks the sin; he  
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<sup>p</sup> Exod. xxxiv. 12.

<sup>q</sup> Exod. xxiii. 33.

<sup>r</sup> Jer. ii. 19.

no less clearly shews the design of the judgment inflicted.

Referring to what has been replied to this objection, that it was because of breach of covenant that God would not henceforth drive out the nations from before the Israelites, this author further says ; “ The precept, it is confessed, was positive and absolute ; but the promise of power to fulfil it, was limited and conditional. It was not until after the Israelites had forsaken the LORD, and worshipped other gods, that the LORD would no more enable them to expel the Chanaanites.—That is to say, the LORD would not enable them to remove, or break the snare, until after they had fallen into it ; and when they have fallen into it, he reproaches them for the non-execution of his precept : and says, the snare shall remain to prove them<sup>s</sup>. ”

The inference which this writer attempts to deduce, that “ the LORD would not enable them to remove, or break the snare, *until* after they had fallen into it,” as it is evidently meant to exhibit the scriptural history in a ridiculous light, is entirely sophistical. The author throws darkness on the passage, which may thus tend to bewilder the reader, by the insertion of the particle *until*. He also recurs to his fallacy in the use of the term *snare*, employing it throughout the sentence, as if it must necessarily bear the same meaning ; whereas the snare into which “ they had fallen,” had a relation to sin, and that which

was

was not to be broken, to punishment. The inference, indeed, is altogether false. For the LORD did still “enable them to break the snare, *until* “they fell into it;” that is, he gave them success against the Canaanites, until they wilfully disobeyed his commandment, and apostatized to their idolatrous courses. Then, indeed, he would no longer “enable them to remove or break the “snare,” because by their sin they had brought this snare upon them, in respect of judgment. This, then, is the only conclusion that can fairly be deduced from the premises:—God would not remove the punishment, *after* they had fallen into that sin, with which it was inseparably connected, according to the threatening.

God had promised to Moses, with respect to those nations; “No man shall be able to stand “before thee, until thou hast destroyed them.” But, according to the Sacred History, no breach of promise is ascribed to God. For this objector himself acknowledges, that “the promise of “power—was limited and conditional.” The accomplishment of it depended on their adherence to the worship of JEHOVAH.

This writer adds a question, for confirming his objection: “Why was it,” that is, the snare, “not completely removed in the days “of Joshua, and of his contemporary elders, “during a period of twenty-five years, when “the people had not abandoned the worship “of the LORD?” It might be a sufficient answer to this cavil, to say, that although God  
had

had seen meet to make trial of their fidelity to him, for the space of *twenty-five years*, before he gave them full possession of the land of promise, no one could justly have said that the trial was either long or severe; especially as he had so recently attested the religion given them, by the most astonishing miracles, continued for a longer time than this, and wrought at the expence, not merely of the nations that opposed them, but also of their gods.

But, according to the narrative, no room is left for this question. Although God had promised to cast out the nations, if his people adhered to him, he had never pledged himself to do it all at once. It was his will to call them to the exercise both of faith and patience; and in this respect, his conduct was also marked with mercy. To Moses he had said, “I will not drive them out before thee in one year, lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land <sup>u</sup>.”

I shall only add, that, according to this writer, there is reason to suspect, that what is called the command of God to exterminate the Canaanites, “is the fabrication of some posterior Jew, to justify the cruelties of his nation.” But let the Gibeonites reply to this objection. If the Israelites were so cruel, why did they spare that people more than the rest? Did they in this instance de-  
viate

<sup>u</sup> Exod. xxiii. 29, 30. See also Deut. vii. 22.

viate from their sanguinary course, because the Gibeonites practised on them a gross imposition, not attributed to any of their neighbours? Or, did they spare them for slaves? If so, how were they satisfied with so few? Why did they prefer them collectively to any individuals of the other nations? It is impossible, indeed, to find any good reason for the preservation of this people; unless we admit, according to the scriptural narrative, that the execution of the precept was suspended in this single instance, in consideration of the oath taken, in the name of JEHOVAH, by Joshua and the princes of Israel v.

Did the historian inform us that the Israelites were eager to enter on the possession of Canaan, and to destroy all the nations said to be devoted; did he inform us, that they actually did so, being more afraid of having such dangerous neighbours than of meeting them at once in battle; we might discern some reason for supposing that he had recourse to a pretended mandate from heaven for excusing their severity. But we are told, on the contrary, that they were very reluctant to enter into Canaan; that their leaders eagerly swallowed an imposture which prevented the execution of the sentence on one body of people; nay, that the Israelites in general did not obey the command of God in destroying these nations, although their disobedience deprived them of the possession of their lands, and exposed them to many dangers. We accordingly find the guilt of this disobedience



obedience often charged upon them by God, and confessed by themselves in succeeding generations <sup>w</sup>.

Had we been informed that the Gibeonites imposed on Joshua and the princes, and that they or the people disregarded the oath as contrary to an express command, and gave up the Gibeonites to the sword ; it might have been argued with some degree of plausibility, that this command was a mere pretence for the indulgence of their sanguinary dispositions. But when we learn that Joshua and the princes considered their oath as suspending the execution of the commanded destruction, and that the congregation submitted to this ; we see no ground for the charge of cruelty ; we perceive the greatest reason for crediting the history in all its circumstances. They discover that dread of a solemn oath which characterizes all conscientious persons ; and will rather dispense with a positive precept than with a moral one ; being more afraid of divine *wrath* on account of perjury, than of the consequences threatened in case of their not obeying the command to destroy the Canaanites <sup>x</sup>.

The history of the destruction of these nations, was “ written for our admonition.” It exhibits the justice, the sovereignty, and the wisdom of God, in a very striking light. It in a special manner points out to us the hatefulness of sin to a God of infinite purity ; and teaches us that we ought to hate it “ with a perfect hatred !” Were God’s

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ancient

<sup>w</sup> Psal. cvi. 34, &c.<sup>x</sup> Josh. ix. 20.

ancient people typical of his spiritual Israel? Their enemies were also figures of ours. God hath set before us all the good of the land of promise. He calls us to go up and inherit it. But he assures us at the same time, that we must fight our way through an host of powerful enemies. Our lusts, like the nations of Canaan, seek to keep us from that inheritance which the LORD hath given us. But he commands us to destroy them utterly, to make no covenant with them, to have no mercy upon them; assuring us that if we spare them, they will prove a snare to us, and lead us astray to serve their gods. What are the gods which these Canaanites serve? They serve Mammon, "this present evil world;" Ashtaroth, the goddess of Pleasure; Satan, "the god of this world." What is our conduct? Like the Israelites, we obey the command of our God only in a partial way. He enjoins us to "crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts, that the body of sin may be destroyed, that henceforth we may not serve sin." He gives us Jesus as "the Captain of our salvation," and promises strength for fighting his battles. But we make little progress in this war. We often make a truce with our spiritual enemies. This is our folly and guilt. But God, in his infinite wisdom and holiness, overrules our conduct for his own glory and our good. He leaves a remnant of the devoted nations to prove us. He "slays them not" entirely, "lest his people should forget." He "destroys them by little and little." At length, "there shall  
" be

“ be no more the Canaanite in the house of the  
“ LORD of hosts.”

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## SECTION VII.

*On Divine Sovereignty ;—in Creation ;—in the Management of the Natural World ;—in the Time appropriated to the Worship of God ;—in the Permission of the Entrance of Sin ;—in the Frame of the Covenant of Works ;—in God's Conduct towards Angels ;—in the Choice of Israel ;—in the Distinction of Nations with respect to External Means of Salvation.*

To no perfection of the divine nature, do men show greater antipathy than to that of sovereignty. This not only appears by their refusing to submit to the grace of God, but by their reluctance to his precept, and their rebellion against his providence. Man strives with his Maker for the dominion, with respect to his faith, his practice, and even his lot. He will acknowledge both justice and mercy, in the divine nature ; he cannot, however, accede to the sovereignty of God in the exercise of these perfections. But sovereignty is impressed, in the most legible characters, not only on the word, but on the works of God. Wherever we turn, it meets our eye. Do we en-

deavour to draw a veil over this ungrateful attribute, as clearly revealed in the doctrines of revelation? It arrests our attention in the histories. Do we attempt to throw it out of our eternal interests? We must acknowledge its influence, however reluctantly, in every thing that concerns us for time. Do we exclude it from the affairs of men? We see it written in the fate of angels. Do we banish it from earth? We find it enthroned in heaven. The Psalmist, therefore, in celebrating this perfection, exhibits in one view the various parts of the universe, as harmonizing in its praise: "Whatsoever the LORD *pleased*, that "did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and "in all deep places y." Does he, who bears the name of Christian, refuse to join in the ascription? Let him go and learn the truth from a heathen. Let him listen to the instructions of the wiser Nebuchadnezzar: "All the inhabitants of the earth "are reputed as nothing: and he doth according "to his will in the army of heaven, and among "the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay "his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou z?"

As the corruptions of men are most deeply engaged against the work of redemption, the greatest opposition to divine sovereignty appears in this quarter. Here it more directly opposes the pride of reason, and the pride of will. Besides, the enemies of the gospel especially aim their shafts against divine sovereignty, as displayed in our salvation. Hence are men staggered and overpowered ;

ed; and perhaps proceed to deny that very perfection, the operation of which they are forced to acknowledge in almost every other of the works of God.

It may, therefore, tend to throw light on this important subject, to consider the display which is made of the sovereignty of God in *other works*, besides that of salvation, and in a variety of *circumstances*, evidently recorded in Scripture in suberviency to this.

A particular illustration of this perfection is the more necessary, because, unless we have just ideas of it, we cannot think justly with respect to any other perfection of God. How eager have earthly princes been to render themselves absolute! The richness of their revenues, the love of their subjects, or the extent of their conquests, have often been viewed as no counterbalance to the want of unlimited authority. Ahab was miserable, because he met with resistance from the possessor of one poor vineyard: and Jezebel, his wife, seemed to think, that his royalty did not deserve the name, if he could not gratify himself in this instance. "Dost thou now," she says, "govern the kingdom of Israel<sup>a</sup>?" Has not many a prince cheerfully hazarded his crown for the mere possibility of enjoying absolute sway? This is the grossest arrogance in man, who is a worm. But sovereign authority is essential to the majesty of God. His will is not influenced by any cause without himself. But we are by no means to form our judgment

<sup>a</sup> 1 Kings xxi. 7.



of divine sovereignty, by comparing it with the arbitrary will of a sinful creature. For God never exercises his sovereignty without a proper end. He is entirely sovereign in the display of his perfections, and in the manner and degree in which he displays them. But his sovereignty is constantly exercised according to the rule of his perfections. It is always in entire consistency with his holiness and justice, wisdom and goodness. While sovereignty is still regulated by these perfections, it lends them a peculiar lustre. It is the royal splendour of all the other attributes of God. Suppose him to be possessed of all possible perfections, and yet to act necessarily in the display of these; it would greatly derogate from their glory. We could not, indeed, acknowledge him as the Supreme Being. By this, more than by any of his moral perfections, he is distinguished from every creature, even the most exalted. To “do *his* pleasure,” is the highest honour to which any creature is advanced <sup>b</sup>. But the Almighty displays his self-existence and independence, by still doing what pleases himself. When, therefore, the Church testifies her assurance, “that the LORD is great, “and that our LORD is above all gods;” this is the evidence that she immediately produces, He “hath done whatsoever he pleased <sup>c</sup>.”

1. The work of *Creation*, in various respects, unfolds this attribute. He, who is Being itself, was under no necessity of nature to communicate being to any other. He is equally independent  
of

<sup>b</sup> Psal. ciii. 21.

<sup>c</sup> Psal. cxxxv. 5, 6.

of all creatures for his blessedness, as for his being. The possession of thousands of worlds cannot in the least enrich him. The praises of myriads of men or angels can make no addition to his felicity. Why, then, did he create the universe? Just because he pleased. The sovereignty of his pleasure, as displayed in the work of creation, is inseparably connected with the work itself, as an equally cogent reason for the highest praise. “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and *for thy pleasure* they are, and were created<sup>d</sup>.” He did not create, without an end worthy of himself. He proposed the manifestation of his infinite wisdom, power and goodness. On the supposition of his engaging in this work, he could have no other end in view. But still his creating, with this very design, was the result of a sovereign act of his will. For he did not stand in need of any external manifestation of his perfections; his blessedness consisting in the eternal contemplation of these, in his own infinite mind.

Is it inquired, why God did not begin to create, till within less than six thousand years back from the present time, when it was in his power to have given a far earlier display of his perfections? Or why, when he had existed from eternity alone, he in time gave being to creatures formed for fellowship with him? It may indeed be said, that no finite nature can exist from eternity; and that, although the most remote period, which the mind

of man can conceive, had been fixed on by God as the date of creation, it would not have approached nearer to eternity than did the actual era of creation. But still the principal solution is, that this was the divine pleasure.

Is it asked, Why did he extend or confine his work to six days? Why hath he formed such a certain number of creatures, and neither more nor fewer? Why hath he given being to many, for which we can discern no use? to many, the existence of which has most probably never been learned, that are hid in the abyſſes of the ſea, and therefore cannot be the means of diſplaying his perfections? To theſe queſtions, and to others innumerable which might be propoſed, we muſt ſtill give the ſame anſwer, “ The Lord hath done “ whatſoever he pleaſed,—in the ſeas, and in all “ deep places.”

Man and beaſt, as to the bodily part, acknowledge the ſame humble origin. “ God ſaid, Let “ the earth bring forth the living creature after “ his kind, cattle and creeping thing, and beaſt of “ the earth after his kind.—And the Lord God “ formed man of the duſt of the ground.” That ſame duſt of which God formed man, and which he animated with a rational and immortal ſpirit, conformed to his own image, might, with equal propriety, had he ſo pleaſed, gone to the formation of the vileſt reptile that crawls on the earth; and the duſt of which that reptile is compoſed, might have conſtituted the corporeal part of man.

But

But in this respect the Almighty Potter hath manifested his “power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour<sup>f</sup>.” And shall we dare to assign limits to his sovereignty? Shall we say to this glorious agent, “Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further?” Shall we admit his sovereignty in the old creation, and refuse it in the new? Shall we acknowledge his right to do with that, which was negatively innocent, as he pleased; and deny him the same right as to that which had actually offended him? When the whole lump of our nature is corrupted by sin, shall we presume to say to him; “Thou mayest not do according to thy pleasure; but must be determined by the will of the clay?” Shall we not rather adopt the acknowledgment of the Church? “Now, O LORD, thou art our father: we are the clay, and thou our Potter, and we all are the work of thy hand<sup>g</sup>.” If we refuse this submission, we may be assured that he shall “dash us in pieces as a potter’s vessel.” For “wo unto him that striveth with his Maker: let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth: shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? Wo unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth<sup>h</sup>?” Would such questions, if addressed to our earthly parents, argue the most daring impiety? What terms shall we find for expressing their wickedness,

<sup>f</sup> Rom. ix. 21.

<sup>g</sup> Isa. lxiv. 8.

<sup>h</sup> Chap. xlv. 9. 10.

ness, when directed to the Almighty Parent himself? Of what account is the clay to the potter? If “the vessel, that he made of it, be marred in his hand, he makes it again another vessel, as *“seems good to the potter to make it.”* Thus doth the LORD address us; “O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel<sup>i</sup>.” Man is a very important being in his own eye. But doth this increase his consequence with his Maker? On the contrary, “all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing<sup>k</sup>.” “Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.—All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity<sup>l</sup>.”

2. This perfection is very apparent in the whole management of the world of *nature*. Often indeed does God employ the elements as the instruments of his justice. But in his ordinary administration, they are to be viewed as the monitors of his sovereignty. “Fire, hail, snow, vapour, stormy wind, fulfil his word<sup>m</sup>.” He not only, for judgment, “causeth it to rain on one city, and not on another<sup>n</sup> ;” but, because it is his pleasure, he causeth “it to rain on the earth where no man is, on the wilderness wherein there is no man<sup>o</sup>.” “He sendeth forth his commandment

i Jer. xviii. 4.—6.

k Dan. iv. 35.

l Isa. xl. 15.—17.

m Psal. cxlviii. 8.

n Amos iv. 7.

o Job xxxviii. 26.



“mandment upon earth ; his word runneth very  
 “swiftly. He giveth snow like wool ; he scat-  
 “tereth the hoar-frost like ashes. He casteth  
 “forth his ice like morsels ; who can stand be-  
 “fore his cold ? He sendeth out his word, and  
 “melteth them : he causeth his wind to blow,  
 “and the waters flow.” All these are effects of  
 his sovereignty in the natural kingdom ; and his  
 conduct in the world of grace is strictly analo-  
 gous. For it immediately follows ; “He shew-  
 “eth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his  
 “judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so  
 “with any nation : and as for his judgments,  
 “they have not known them p.”

3. God hath displayed his sovereignty in con-  
 secrating the *seventh* part of our *time* to his ser-  
 vice. The worship of rational creatures is found-  
 ed on the nature of God. But the limitation of  
 the time, to be devoted to his service, depends  
 upon his will. He might have restricted the la-  
 bour of man to five days, or extended it to seven.  
 He might have claimed six parts of our time, and  
 allowed us only the seventh to ourselves. In this  
 case, we could have had no right to complain ;  
 for he would have ordered matters so, that, what  
 part of our time soever was devoted to work,  
 would have been sufficient for our sustenance.  
 The reason assigned for the consecration of a  
 seventh portion of our time, is God’s working six  
 days, and resting on the seventh<sup>q</sup>. But this is  
 only to be viewed as the immediate reason. As  
 his

p Psal. cxlvii. 15.—20.

q Gen. ii. 2, 3.

his working exactly six days depended on his sovereign pleasure ; to the same source must the sanctification of a seventh part of our time be ultimately traced. For he previously determined, in the immutable counsel of his will, to work only six days, to rest on the seventh, and therefore to appropriate this portion of time to his worship.

4. God hath signally displayed his sovereignty in permitting the *entrance* of *sin*. It would be every way unworthy of God, to suppose that he could not have prevented this. He, who formed intelligent creatures after his own image, could as easily have secured them in the possession of this state of integrity, without a possibility of falling. Had he pleased, sin would have been unknown both to angels and to men. We may be assured, therefore, that he had a proper end in view in determining the permission of this greatest of evils. Reason itself teaches us, that whatever is permitted by the moral Governor of the world must be for the best. Scripture confirms its voice, by informing us that God maketh "the very wrath of man to praise him." We may therefore rest satisfied, that, in his infinite wisdom, he saw that he could bring greater glory to himself even by means of sin, than if it had never been permitted. He knew that there would be an opportunity for the display of perfections, which otherwise, although revealed, could never have been exercised ;—for the display of justice in the punishment of sin, or of mercy in the pardon of it, or of both with

with respect to different objects. But his knowledge of the possibility of this, laid him under no necessity as to the event. Was it an act of his sovereign will to manifest his perfections at all? It was no less a sovereign act to determine that they should be displayed in this particular way, as the consequence of the entrance of sin. Had he seen meet to restrict himself to that display of his perfections which was consistent with a state of universal innocence, no one could have had a right to find fault. Although millions of intelligent creatures suffer, in consequence of his permitting the entrance of sin, no one may dare to complain. For, "who hath enjoined him his way? "or who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity<sup>r</sup>."

Again, the measure of this evil is entirely the result of his sovereign pleasure. He might have suffered sin to enter among angels, and prevented its introduction into our lower world. Or he might have permitted this rebellion on his footstool, and prevented the possibility of its raising its head around his throne. It might have been so ordered, that only a part of the human race should have been involved in rebellion; while the integrity of others might have been secured, like that of holy angels. Nay, he might have suffered the evil to extend as far in heaven as it hath done on earth, and given it that restraint on earth which it hath had in heaven. Various conjectures may be offered as to the reasons of the divine conduct in these respects; and various reflections  
may

may be made, illustrating its infinite propriety. But all these things must be ultimately resolved into the pleasure of Him who “worketh all things “after the counsel of his own will c.”

We may add, that one great end for which God hath permitted the entrance of this greatest of evils, is deeply to impress rational creatures with a sense of this adorable perfection. It might have been manifested in a variety of instances, although sin had never entered. It was, as has been seen, actually manifested before the entrance of sin. But, had not the eternal interests of intelligent creatures immediately depended on the exercise of this perfection, it could never have appeared with such glory and majesty.

5. The sovereignty of God eminently appears in *suspending* the whole happiness of mankind on the *conduct* of *one* person. This perfection, indeed, is not the only one that may be traced in the federal character given to our common parent. If we take a just view of it, we shall perceive a striking display of divine grace. The carnal heart, which still reflects on the ways of God, may be apt to accuse his justice, and to insinuate, that matters had been set on a better footing for the human race, if the happiness or misery of every individual had depended on his own conduct; that, in this case, although many, “like Adam,” might “have transgressed the covenant,” it is improbable that all would have done so; that, at any rate, the fall, and the consequent misery of some,

some, would have deterred others from following their example. But every one knows, that there is no tie which more powerfully restrains man than a regard to his offspring ; that this will influence, when every other consideration is ineffectual. And surely, there never was a parent who felt the force of this obligation so powerfully as Adam. He felt it in all its sinless purity, and in all its possible extent. His individual interest was not merely at stake. He saw countless millions of his posterity looking up to him as the trustee of their happiness, or as the cause of their misery, not for time only, but for eternity. He knew that every one of these, in their successive generations, would either rise up and call him blessed, or accuse him as the murderer of his offspring.

But although we have abundant reason to admire the grace of God in this transaction, it also bears a striking impress of sovereignty. It flowed from the nature of God, that, when he formed a rational creature, he should give him a law. But his entering into covenant with man was the result of his pleasure. He might have made a covenant with Adam, without the idea of representation ; or he might have extended it to all, so that the condition should have respected every one in an individual capacity. He doth not ask the consent of all whom this covenant concerns. As the Lord of all, he subjects them to it in their common parent. He doth not even require the formal consent of the common representative. As



a sovereign, he promulgates the covenant in the form of a command: "The LORD God *command-*  
*ed* the man <sup>t</sup>." He denies liberty to his creature to dispute his authority. He knew that an innocent creature could not do so. The time, limited for probation, depended also entirely on his will. He might either make this known to Adam, or conceal it from him, as he pleased.

6. He signally displayed his sovereignty in immediately suspending the happiness of man on obedience to a *positive* precept. "The LORD God  
 "commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of  
 "the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the  
 "tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou  
 "shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou  
 "eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die <sup>u</sup>." Had man transgressed any precept of the moral law, his fall would have been no less certain. But why make a regard to this positive injunction the turning hinge of his obedience? Why not rather rest it on a moral precept, the reasonableness of which would have been more evident to man, as flowing from the nature of his Creator; while the idea of disobedience might have affected his mind with greater horror? Here God manifested his absolute authority. Had he fixed on a moral, rather than on a positive precept, the reasonableness of the thing itself might have seemed to be the origin of the obligation. But God would teach his creature, that *his* will was the formal reason of obedience; and that man was equally bound  
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<sup>t</sup> Gen. ii. 16.

<sup>u</sup> Gen. ii. 16, 17.

to obey, where he saw no abstract reason for the duty, as where he did. Whence we may observe by the way, that moral obligation is not founded on what some call “the fitness of things,” but on the will of the Supreme Lawgiver; and that this can be known to us only in consequence of his being pleased to reveal it. God makes man lord of the lower creation. But he must know, that his dominion is limited, and that absolute sovereignty is the prerogative of his Maker alone. He gives him power over all things in this world, but one. A single tree shows the limitation of his authority. The more paltry the object, the more striking the display of divine dominion. This is a tree, not without Eden, or in an obscure corner of it, but “in the midst of the garden.” It must be still in his eye, or in his way, while he is engaged about his work; that it may still remind him of the sovereignty of God, and of his own dependence. The authority of the Lawgiver must be no less the reason of his faith, than of his obedience. Nothing in the appearance of the tree could indicate that fatal tendency ascribed to it; but every thing quite the contrary. For “it was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes.” Yet man is bound to believe that the taste of this tree is mortal, because God hath said it. He must rather discredit the evidence of his own senses, than that of God. His understanding must refuse to hear their testimony, however plausible, in contradiction to the divine.

7. The divine conduct with respect to *angels* contains a striking display of sovereignty. God, in his eternal purpose, chose some angels, and rejected others. We accordingly read of *elect* angels. Thus Paul addresses Timothy ; “ I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and “ the elect angels w.” On them he determined to confer an eternity of holiness and felicity ; while he decreed to permit the fall of myriads of others, and to leave them in their state of guilt and misery. These, whom he suffered to fall, and whom he cast off for ever, were by nature as pure and perfect as those who “ kept their first estate.” Hence it is evident, that they were chosen, not because of any superior excellency, but merely from distinguishing love. Their standing, while others fell, must be ultimately resolved into the purpose of God, pre-ordaining that they should stand. For nothing takes place in time, but in consequence of an unalterable decree from eternity.

It pleased God to display the sovereignty of his will, not merely with respect to his creatures as fallen, but with respect to them as innocent. He willed to show, not only that, as transgressors, they could not make themselves to differ ; but that, as sinless creatures, their standing primarily depended on an act of his sovereign pleasure. We are bound, indeed, to believe, that both those angels who apostatized, and man, had abstractedly a sufficiency of grace for obedience, if they inclined

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to exercise it. But they could not continue in the proper exercise of their freedom of will, unless God willed that they should do so. For “in him we are moved.” As the creature cannot resist the divine will, as little can he effectually will any thing, unless it be the pleasure of God that the event shall certainly take place.

It therefore appears, that God absolutely decreed the permission of sin, in order to illustrate the glory of his own sovereignty and independence, as contrasted with the mere dependence of his most exalted creatures; to shew that, in their most perfect state, they are indebted to him, not only for their faculties, but for the proper exercise of them in every instance; and that even when they have happiness in their own hands, they cannot keep it, except the Supreme Lord efficaciously will that this shall be the case. He suffered his most holy creatures to manifest their comparative imperfection, for the illustration of his own absolute and immutable perfection. “Behold, he put no trust in his servants, and his angels he charged with folly.” Thus he makes it evident, that the greatest glory of the creature consists, not in his will being independent of God’s, but in its being so determined and influenced by his, that the creature cannot possibly choose what is evil. For surely, an elect angel, who cannot sin, is in a state of higher perfection than one, who, although free from sin, might be a devil the next moment. The creature is never so like his

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Maker,



Maker, as when, by a sovereign act of the divine will, he is unalterably determined to good. That freedom of will which Adam had, and which many of his fallen race lay claim to, although it may seem more remote from dependence, is nearer to sin. It has the semblance of a greater conformity to the sovereignty of God. But it has nothing more. For the absolute sovereignty of his will is inseparably connected with the immutability of his nature. While he does whatsoever he wills, he cannot will to do what is inconsistent with his infinite holiness.

We may observe, by the way, the absurdity of the doctrine of those who assert, that God has given to all, who hear the gospel, a sufficiency of grace to believe and repent, if they will. For if God does not effectually will that they shall believe and repent, all this pretended sufficiency of grace must be to no purpose. It is also evident, that the state of every believer in Christ is more secure than was that of the first Adam. For the will of the Christian, by the unalterable purpose and almighty power of God, is unchangeably, although in this life imperfectly, determined to good; whereas that of our common representative, although perfect, was mutable.

The same sovereignty appears, when we consider the *way* in which they are brought to confirmation in their state of blessedness. Had God pleased, he might have permitted their apostacy, as well as that of the other "sons of God." Such was his conduct towards all the "vessels of mercy" among



among the human race. Their fall must be preparatory to a more glorious rising. But while he glorifies his sovereignty, he will do it in a variety of ways, whether mercy or justice be the end. While he is pleased to save some lost sinners of mankind, he chooses rather to preserve a part of the angelic family from being lost.

But perhaps the sovereignty of God most signally appears in the rejection of *all* the fallen angels. "God spared not the angels that sinned, "but cast them down to hell, and delivered them "into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto "judgment<sup>z</sup>." "The angels which kept not their "first estate, but left their own habitation, he "hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day<sup>a</sup>." Here the display of sovereignty appears more striking, if we contrast with this his conduct towards many of the human race. They have become partners with devils in their guilt and condemnation; yet they are objects of mercy. Although, in the scale of being, the human nature is far inferior to the angelic; men are "redeemed from "the lowest hell," while this is the portion of all the fallen angels. These *morning-stars* are covered with everlasting darkness, and worms of the dust are exalted in their stead. No Saviour is provided for a superior nature; yet the eternal Word becomes flesh. "For verily he took not "upon him the nature of angels, but the seed "of Abraham<sup>b</sup>." Angels are eternally punished

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for

z 2 Pet. ii. 4.

a Jude 6.

b Heb. ii. 16.

for one transgression. Men, whose iniquities are more than the hairs upon their heads, are pardoned. Mercy is not once exhibited to one angel that fell; while those sinners of the human family, who have a thousand times rejected this gracious exhibition, are eventually “brands plucked out of the fire.”

The ingenuity of man has devised various reasons for the divine conduct in this respect. It has been supposed, that God might choose rather to save fallen man than fallen angels, because the latter sinned without any temptation; whereas man was caught in the snare of the devil. It has been said, that there was not the same reason for the recovery of any of the angelic family, because the apostacy did not extend to them all. Various conjectures of a similar kind have been made. But we can give no other reason for God's passing by all fallen angels, while he fixed his love on some of our rebellious race, than that which we have in the language of Nebuchadnezzar: “He doth according to his will in the army of heaven.” *Legions* of this army rebelled against their Lord. Had he pleased, he could have delivered them from their guilt, and restored them to obedience. But it was *his will* that they should eternally reap the fruits of their disobedience.

If “he doth according to his will in the army of heaven,” who can deny his right to do so—“among the inhabitants of this earth?” If God might

might choofe fome angels, and reject others, may he not act the fame part with refpect to men? If there was no injuftice or partiality in his conduct towards thefe “fons of God;” can his conduct be unjuft or partial in making a fovereign diftinction among the fons of Adam? If the one was not inconfiftent with his infinite goodnefs, how can fuch inconfiftency appear with refpect to the other? Let fallen angels complain, if any of them can prefume fo far; becaufe they are all left to perift, while many of the human race are faved. “But who art thou, O *man*, who replieft againft “God?” Might he not with equal juftice have condemned the whole of this race, as all the apoftate angels? If he is pleafed to fave any, although mercy be not extended to all, what right haft thou to arraign his conduct? May he not do with his own as he pleafeth? If thou wilt oppofe divine fovereignty, do it confiftently. Before thou denieft the doctrine of a fovereign choice among men, tell thy Maker to his face that he acted unjuftly in paffing by all the fallen angels. But, arrogant creature, thou art filent on this head. Even fallen angels muft be aftonifhed at thy blind partiality, and clearly perceive that thou judgelt of equity according to the relation it bears to thy own intereft. Or fhall I rather fay, that they rejoice in their fuccefs in blinding thy mind on this fubject; as conftituting an eminent part of their revenge againft the fovereign Difpofor of all, for the awful difplay of his fovereignty at their expence? Is it thus they attempt to rob

God of the glory, and man of the blessed fruits, of that attribute from which they derive no benefit themselves? And is this all thy return of gratitude to God, for the ineffable advantage that accrues to thy fallen nature from the exercise of this adorable perfection? Dost thou “thus requite the LORD, O foolish and unwise?”

I shall only further add on this article, that the sovereignty of God eminently appears in exalting fallen man to *greater honour* than that enjoyed by angels who never fell. I speak not of the honour to which our nature is advanced in the person of the Mediator. How great is that of the younger brethren! They are redeemed by the blood of Him who is God. They are made to sit with him upon his throne. The highest dignity to which holy angels are admitted, is that of being servants to Christ as Mediator. Nay, “are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who are the heirs of salvation?” Did they imitate the language of presumptuous man, they would say; “It were honour enough for fallen worms, to minister to pure spirits who never sinned. Instead of this, however, by an absolute determination, we are required to minister to them. We must watch over their bodies, and waft their souls to heaven. They sit on their seats<sup>d</sup>, and our highest honour is to stand before God<sup>e</sup>, or to fly through the universe in his service<sup>f</sup>.” But were it possible, they could utter such language, they would instantly

<sup>d</sup> Rev. iv. 4.; xi. 16.

<sup>e</sup> Luke i. 19.

<sup>f</sup> Dan. ix. 21.



stantly be hurled into hell. These intelligent spirits must be fully persuaded that the distinction results from the sovereignty of their Creator ; and even this sovereignty they adore. In this consists the perfection of these “ ministers of his,” that they “ do his pleasure <sup>g.</sup>” And this very perfection are we taught to pray for, as the highest honour of our nature. Our Lord therefore taught his disciples to say ; “ Thy will be done on earth, “ as it is in heaven <sup>h.</sup>”

8. God manifested his sovereignty, in choosing *Israel* as a peculiar people. Both in the choice itself, and in the circumstances of it, may we clearly perceive the display of this perfection. Let us attend to the *choice* itself. Is not God the common father of men ? Are not all equally his offspring ? Hath he not “ made of one blood all “ nations to dwell on the face of the whole “ earth ?” Is there any nation, however remote from others, however barbarous, to which he can say, Ye are not the work of my hands ? Yet here we find him selecting one nation from all the rest, to enjoy the honours and privileges of a peculiar people. Were they to be more especially under the care of his providence ? Was he to favour them with a more fertile land, richer harvests, a more abundant increase ? Was he to give them greater success against their enemies, or to make them more distinguished for wisdom, and proficiency in arts and sciences ? All this had been little. He chose them to the enjoyment of the means of salvation, while he excluded every other  
nation

<sup>g</sup> Psal. ciii. 21.

<sup>h</sup> Mat. vi. 10.



nation under heaven from this privilege. "He shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them <sup>i</sup>."

Many, indeed, in order to draw a veil over divine sovereignty, attempt to depreciate this mercy; as if it were to judge hardly of God, to suppose that he left all the nations, that were destitute of revelation, to perish for eternity. But the Israelites were assured that this was their distinguishing mercy; that they were "a blessed people who knew the joyful sound;" that where there was "no vision, the people would perish;" and that God would "pour his fury on the heathen." It is the harmonious voice of Scripture, that those who are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," being "strangers to the covenants of promise," have therefore "no hope," and are "without God," or "atheists in the world <sup>k</sup>."

If this were not the case, I shall venture to say that the Israelites, so far from being more highly favoured than other nations, were treated with far greater severity. If God did not display his sovereignty in choosing them to the enjoyment of privileges necessary to salvation, he undoubtedly displayed that same perfection, though in a very different way, in subjecting them to a bondage from which all other nations were free, while they were not to be any better for it. For the law

<sup>i</sup> Psal. cxlvii. 19, 20.

<sup>k</sup> Eph. ii. 12.

law was “a yoke, which,” an apostle says, “neither our fathers nor we were able to bear<sup>1</sup>.”

Whence, then, could God exercise such a power as this? Whence is it that we have no right to impeach his justice? It is because, being the Sovereign LORD, he may “do according to his will among the inhabitants of this earth.”

Now, what God did to the literal posterity of Jacob, was typical of his conduct to spiritual Israel. Did he choose them to be externally holy<sup>m</sup>? This choice was figurative of the election of his people “to be holy and without blame before him in love?” Hence, as has been formerly observed, the Spirit of God applies to them that very language, which is primarily used concerning the type: “Ye are a chosen generation, an holy nation, a peculiar people<sup>n</sup>.” What was originally extended to all the descendants of Jacob, is here restricted to those who are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ<sup>o</sup>.”

If we attend to the *circumstances* of this choice, the same character will appear to be equally impressed on it. Were they entitled to this distinction, from any superior worth on their part? If this was the case, they must have possessed this recommendation, in respect of origin, dignity, wealth, extent, wisdom or goodness. Were they better than other nations as to *origin*? What-  
ever

<sup>1</sup> Acts xv. 10.

<sup>m</sup> Exod. xix. 6.

<sup>n</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 9.

<sup>o</sup> Chap. i. 2.

ever they might themselves imagine, they had no pre-eminence, according to the estimation of God. Thus he addresses them: “Thy birth, and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan, thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite <sup>p</sup>.” Nay, thus he commands them to address him, when appearing before him with their oblations; “A Syrian ready to perish was my father <sup>q</sup>.” In their solemn approaches, they must still remember the meanness of their origin, and acknowledge that, in this respect, they had no ground of boasting before God.

Could the temporal *dignity* of their situation, when God separated them to himself, entitle them to this distinction? Were they not *aliens* in Egypt? For several centuries they were strangers in a land that was not theirs <sup>r</sup>. Yea, they were *slaves*. Had God regarded national dignity, he would undoubtedly have preferred the Egyptians, who were not only their masters, but a very ancient people, and distinguished as a nation long before the name of Israel was known.

They could boast as little of their *riches*. They had no possessions of their own. That Syrian, their father, from whom they received their name, “sojourned in Egypt <sup>s</sup>.” Abraham had no higher character. Wherever he was, whether in Canaan, or in Egypt, he was still a sojourner. His only estate was a burial-place, as if God meant to teach him, that he should have no rest but in the grave. What riches they had, when they left Egypt,

<sup>p</sup> Ezek. xvi. 3.

<sup>q</sup> Deut. xxvi. 5.

<sup>r</sup> Gen. xv. 13.

<sup>s</sup> Deut. xxvi. 5.

Egypt, were given them by God, as the reward of their past labours.

Did their *extent* as a people recommend them to God? So contemptible were they in this respect, that, had he judged after the manner of man, they would have been the last nation that he would have selected. Observe how Moses addresses Israel on this head. "The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people, (for ye were the fewest of all people)<sup>t</sup>." This was to be an article in their solemn confession, already referred to: "Thou shalt speak, and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a *few* <sup>v</sup>." God promised them all the good which he afterwards conferred, when they were despicable as to numbers. He said, "Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance: when they were but a few men in number: yea, very few, and strangers in it <sup>v</sup>."

But perhaps their superior *wisdom* procured this distinguishing honour. On the contrary, in respect of human wisdom, they were greatly inferior to some other nations. They were far surpassed by the Egyptians. Their conduct, in a variety of instances, shews their deficiency as to divine wisdom. Had they not been formerly enamoured with the brutish worship of Egypt, would they ever have thought of making a calf? Had they not

<sup>t</sup> Deut. vii. 7.

<sup>n</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> Psal. cv. 11, 12.

not been extremely stupid, would they ever have thought of it, after hearing the voice of God? Moses accuses them of requiting the Lord, “as a foolish people and unwise.” They receive the very same character from God. “They are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them<sup>w</sup>.” And they continued to deserve no better character, in their succeeding generations: “My people is foolish,—they are foolish children, and they have none understanding<sup>x</sup>.”

If they were so deficient as to wisdom in divine things, it cannot be supposed that their superior goodness would atone for their other defects. This, indeed, is immediately added as the great evidence of their want of true wisdom: “They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge<sup>y</sup>.” Even the sons of Jacob were stained by envy, cruelty and perfidy. They hated Joseph, because their father loved him. They first conspired against his life, and afterwards sold him for a slave. Their cruel and perfidious conduct to the Shechemites made Jacob “to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites, and the Perizzites<sup>z</sup>”; the very people whom God, because of their wickedness, was to drive out before Israel. We have formerly seen, that in Egypt they polluted themselves with the idolatry of the inhabitants of that land. Afterwards, as if a mere conformity to their

<sup>w</sup> Deut. xxxii. 6 28.

<sup>x</sup> Jer. iv. 22.

<sup>y</sup> Ibid.

<sup>z</sup> Gen. xxxiv. 27. 30.



their idolatrous neighbours had been too little, they did worse than all the nations round about <sup>a</sup>, “worse than the heathen whom the Lord had destroyed before them <sup>b</sup>.”

The all-wise God knew their character when he chose them. None can be so foolish as to imagine that he hoped they would prove better than they did, that they would be awed by his judgments, or mollified by his mercies. He foresaw the whole extent of their wickedness. Thus, he expressly testifies that he knew what they were, and what they would be. He declares that when he fixed his love on them, he discerned nothing that could in any respect or degree prove a recommendation. He illustrates their original situation by a most striking allusion to a child exposed by its unnatural parent, according to a barbarous custom that greatly prevailed among the heathen. Instead of wealth or power, he saw nothing but nakedness and weakness! Instead of wisdom or moral beauty, all the ignorance of infancy and the grossest pollution! “Thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born <sup>c</sup>.” He also declares his certain foreknowledge of their future conduct: “I knew that thou wouldst deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb <sup>d</sup>.”

Since such was the character of this people, why did God choose them? The sovereignty of his

<sup>a</sup> Ezek. xvi. 46, 47.

<sup>b</sup> 2 Chr. xxxiii. 9.

<sup>c</sup> Ezek. xvi. 5.

<sup>d</sup> Isa. xlviii. 8.

his own will was the only reason of his choice. He looked for no moving cause without himself. He took care that they should be particularly informed of this. Therefore Moses, having informed the Israelites, that the Lord did not set his love upon them, nor choose them because of their number, subjoins ;—“ But because the LORD “ loved you, and because he would keep the oath “ which he had sworn unto your fathers <sup>e</sup>.” The faithfulness of God, although here connected with his sovereignty, is not to be considered as a reason for his love, but for their enjoyment of the fruits of it, in being “ brought out,” as it follows, “ with a mighty hand, and redeemed out of “ the house of bondmen.” For the operation of the faithfulness of God, with respect to them, was only the fruit of the eternal purpose of his love. He had “ sworn to their fathers,” because he had, in absolute sovereignty, chosen their seed to be his peculiar people. Moses elsewhere assures them, that God stood in no need of them as a people : “ Behold, the heaven, and the heaven of heavens “ is the LORD’s thy God, the earth also with all “ that therein is. *Only* the LORD had delight in “ thy fathers to love them, and he chose their “ seed after them, even you above all people, as it “ is this day <sup>f</sup>.” And well might the man of God remind Israel of the sovereignty of this choice, when he pleads it with God himself, as a more powerful argument in their behalf, than all their unworthiness could be against them : “ Look “ not

<sup>e</sup> Deut. vii. 7, 8.

<sup>f</sup> Deut. x: 14, 15.

“not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin.—Yet they are thy people, and thine inheritance.”

Now, as, in the choice of literal Israel, God had no respect to any worth in the object of his love, this was a *figure* of the sovereign manner in which he chooses his true Israel. They had no merit, when he separated them as his peculiar people. Thus they fitly prefigured them, who are called, “not for works of righteousness which they have done, but of his own mercy.” Did he know that the future conduct of his chosen people would be equally undeserving? In this also they exhibited the character of his spiritual seed. For when he fixed his love on them, he foresaw all their wanderings and apostacies, their unbelief and ingratitude. But he “loved them, because he loved them.” If, without any obstacle on the part of his justice or goodness, he might single out one nation to the enjoyment of spiritual privileges, to the exclusion of every other; who will presume to say that it is inconsistent with any of these perfections, that he should select certain persons to the enjoyment of all the benefit arising from these spiritual privileges, although others be excluded? Indeed, to shew us the great design of this part of the divine conduct, we find this national election *terminating* in a choice of individuals. When God had served his ends, by the election of a particular nation, when he was about to abolish this distinction, we find

it running into an election of persons, to the exclusion of the body of that once-favoured nation. Were the carnal Jews ready to object, that the Christian religion could not be true, because in this case God must have rejected his people, and broken his promise? the apostle Paul could reply; “They are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children.—They which are the children of the flesh are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.” Thus he shews that it could by no means be said, that “the word of God had taken none effect;” that his promise to the fathers had failed <sup>h</sup>. He shews that the promise, although it literally and primarily respected the choice of the nation, as such, to distinguishing privileges, carried in its womb, nay, ultimately and specially respected a further display of divine sovereignty, in the choice of individuals of that nation to the essence of these privileges; that, although its outward aspect seemed confined to Israel according to the flesh, it was inwardly pointed to all who should be the seed of Abraham by faith, “not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles <sup>i</sup>.” He even shews that all along, under the old dispensation, the national election to external privileges, was only a figure of a personal election to those which are inward; that the former was as it were the covering of the other, the cabinet, however precious in itself, that contained

<sup>h</sup> Rom. ix. 6.—8.

<sup>i</sup> Ver. 24.



tained the more precious jewel. He therefore applies the history of Elias, as a proof of personal and particular election<sup>k</sup>. The prophet imagined that he was "left alone" in the service of JEHOVAH. "But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Here we have an election of *individuals*, as distinguished from the nation in general; an election of a *certain* number, "seven thousand men;" an election to *holiness*, for they made no compliances with idolatry; an election of *grace*, and terminating in *efficacious* power; for God claims the work as wholly his own; "I have reserved:" and an election *to the praise of the glory of his grace*, as the end; "I have reserved *to myself*." The apostle asserts that he taught no new doctrine; that when he affirmed a personal election, he affirmed no more than what was taught by God himself, and exemplified in the history of Israel, in the days of Elias: "*Even so* then at this present time *also*, there is a remnant, according to the election of grace." Thus it is evident, that the national election of Israel, to external privileges, *typified, terminated in*, nay, all along *included*, an election of persons to that saving grace of which these were only the means.

10. There never was, and there never will be, any nation so peculiarly distinguished as ancient Israel. But the sovereignty of God still appears in that distinction which he makes among *nations*

P 2

with

<sup>k</sup> Rom. xi. 2.—5.



with respect to the *means* of salvation. How many nations are there in the world that never heard of salvation? How many, that have been deprived of the gospel during a long series of ages? Who hath made us, in these isles of the sea, to differ from others, as to the external privileges of grace? Are we Britons so much better than the natives of Hindostan, that we are favoured with the gospel, while they are buried in the darknes of heathenism? Let the history of our conduct in that distant country, for several ages, give an answer to the question. Why hath God left the Chinese, perhaps in other respects the wisest people in the world, in gross obscurity, and extended his mercy to us? Did he expect that we would be more grateful and obedient to him, or more humane and loving to man, than many other nations whom he hath left in darknes? To say so, would be to arraign the foreknowledge of God. For there are other nations in the world, that never enjoyed the means of salvation, whose manners would extort a blush from the generality of professed Christians, did they “not refuse to be ashamed.” We must either deny divine prescience altogether, or admit that God foreknew all this; foreknew that the greatest part of those called Christians, would “cause even *his* “name to stink among the inhabitants” of heathen countries; that their ungodly conduct would prove the greatest obstacle to the propagation of Christianity. Why then did he favour such nations with the gospel, and deny it to others? We must

must undoubtedly resolve it into the sovereignty of his own will. This choice of nations to external privileges, is as really an act of sovereignty, as the choice of individuals to eternal life ; unless it can be proved that the enjoyment of the means is not necessary to the attainment of the end. Let those who think so answer these questions ; “ How shall they believe in him of whom they “ have not heard ? And how shall they hear “ without a preacher <sup>1</sup> ? ” But if it be necessary to hear of Christ before men can believe in him, and if “ there is not another name under heaven, given among men by which we must be saved ; ” surely, God displays the sovereignty of his will, in giving this revelation to some, and withholding it from others. This display may not at first strike the eye so much as that with respect to the end. But it is for want of attention. For if men cannot be saved without the gospel of the grace of God, (and there is not one word in the Bible that gives us reason to suppose the contrary), he acts no less sovereignly in refusing men the means, than in withholding the end ; because the end cannot be attained without the means.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. x. 14.

## SECTION VIII.

*On Divine Sovereignty in the Division of Canaan ; —the Treatment of the Tribes of Israel ;—the Choice of a Place of Worship ;—the Employment of Means and Instruments of Judgment or Mercy ;—the Distribution of Gifts ;—the Management of our Lot ;—the Afflictions of the Children of God ;—with respect to earthly Kingdoms ;—in relation to the Church.—Severe Judgments inflicted for the Denial of this Perfection.*

II. THE sovereignty of God is illustrated by the manner in which he *divided the land* of Canaan among the tribes of Israel. This was by lot, as it was declared by Moses<sup>m</sup> : “ The land “ shall be divided by lot ; according to the names “ of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. “ According to the lot shall the possessions thereof “ be divided, between many and few.” While by this ordination God taught his people their dependance upon his sovereign pleasure for all temporal mercies, it had a further and a special reference to those which “ pertain to life and godliness.” No tribe, no family could say, “ We “ have obtained from Joshua a better inheritance “ than such another tribe or family, because we “ had

<sup>m</sup> Num. xxvi. 55, 56.

“had a superior claim by our services.” For “the lot was cast into the lap, and the whole disposal thereof was of the LORD.” No one could say, “I shall dwell here, because it is my choice.” For the choice was wholly God’s. In this was prefigured the choice of the spiritual Israel; which is “not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” This very language is applied to the seed of the antitypical Jacob. Thus in the forty-seventh Psalm, which contains a celebration of the ascension of our Lord, of the true Joshua’s entering into his rest, and of the blessed fruits of it in the subjection of the nations to the faith, the Church adopts this language, as ascribing all spiritual blessings to “the good pleasure of his will;” “He shall choose our inheritance for us; the excellency of Jacob whom he loved<sup>n</sup>.” Nay, that Elect in whom the soul of the Father delighteth, employs the same language concerning himself, in his public character. “Thou maintainest my lot<sup>o</sup>.” He acknowledges that his designation to the work of redemption, and the consequent reward, were primarily to be ascribed to the sovereign choice of the Father, who “hath chosen us in him<sup>p</sup>.”

The same language runs through the whole of the New Testament. Hath God chosen his people to a glorious inheritance? It was not for their foreseen faith, good works, or perseverance. It is as much of sovereignty as the appointment

P 4

of

n Ver. 5.

o Psal. xvi. 5.

p Eph. i. 4.

of the tribes of Israel to particular inheritances. The Gentiles are, therefore, said to “receive an inheritance,” literally, “a *lot* among them who “are sanctified.” We are “made meet to be “partakers of the *lot* of the saints in light p.” Here creature-merit is excluded on every side. For the inheritance is not only called a lot, but we are said to be “made meet for” it, which plainly shews, that we are naturally unmeet, and cannot qualify ourselves by any thing that we can do. Not only is the inheritance said to be given to the people of God by lot: but the expression is reversed. They are said to be chosen to it, in the same manner. For in Christ “we “have obtained an inheritance,” or, “we have “been designed by lot:” and no wonder such language is used, as it follows,—“being predestinated *according to the purpose* of him who “worketh *all* things after the counsel of *his own will*.” The latter language shows the reason why the former is used. It is said, that we are designed by *lot*; because our enjoyment of the inheritance depends wholly on the sovereign pleasure of God. This mode of expression does not denote any thing accidental or contingent with respect to him; but that he pays as little regard to merit in the objects of his choice, as if they were chosen by lot; as little, as a creature would do, who should decide with respect to an earthly inheritance in this way. We receive the inheritance willingly. But it is God who “worketh in us to “will.”



“will.” We are eventually qualified for it. But this is only as he “worketh in us to do.”

12. As God manifested his sovereignty, in the instance already mentioned, with respect to the tribes of Israel in general, he did so, in other instances, as to particular *tribes, families* and *persons*. It is generally admitted, that before the giving of the law, the first-born of the different families of Israel had acted as priests. It appears, that for a time God sanctioned this practice, by hallowing the first-born<sup>r</sup>. Now, Levi was not the first-born. Yet his posterity were separated to God for the work of the priesthood. Was it because of any superior worth in their progenitor? Surely no. For Levi was brother to Simeon in cruelty. His children could not be better qualified than their brethren for the service of the altar, because their father had made a sacrifice of the Shechemites. This designation is wholly referred to the pleasure of God. “The LORD separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD, to minister unto him, and to bless in his name<sup>s</sup>.” “The priests, the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the LORD thy God hath chosen to minister unto him<sup>t</sup>.”

Neither was Judah the first-born. But God conferred the sceptre on the tribe which bore his name. He “chose not the tribe of Ephraim: but chose the tribe of Judah<sup>u</sup>.” To it also he gave

<sup>r</sup> Numb. iii. 13.

<sup>s</sup> Deut. x. 8.

<sup>t</sup> Deut. xxi. 5.

<sup>u</sup> Psal. lxxviii. 67, 68.

gave the exclusive promise of the descent of the Messiah. In this tribe, the regal power was confined to the family of Jesse, although it was not distinguished for wealth or greatness. Thence some spake contemptibly of David: "Who is David? or who is the son of Jesse?" From this consideration David himself extols divine sovereignty: "What am I, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" Bethlehem was but a mean village. Yet here must the Messiah be born: "And thou Bethlehem-Ephratah, although thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel w." The family of Joseph seems to have been one of the meanest in the house of David, or belonging to Bethlehem. For Joseph and Mary could find no lodging but in a stable. Yet from this family must the Messiah spring.

13. God signalized his sovereignty in the *choice* of that particular *place* where he would be worshipped. All places are alike to Him, to whom "the earth belongs, and the fulness thereof;" who "fillethe heaven and earth;" whom "heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain." But, under the law, he inculcated the doctrine of his sovereignty on the church, by not only regulating the whole manner of worship, but by limiting the place. That she might have still more reason for learning unreserved submission to his will, she was long kept in suspense. All that she

was

was permitted to know, was the certainty of God's choosing such a place. But where it might be, or when he might be pleased to declare his will in this respect, she was absolutely ignorant. "There shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose, to cause his name to dwell there, thither shall ye bring all that I command you<sup>x</sup>." He dealt with the seed of Abraham as he had done with their father, with respect to that very place where he was afterwards to put his name. He commanded him to go and offer up his son on one of the mountains which he should tell him of<sup>y</sup>. Here, indeed, was the true Isaac sacrificed. This place, although in itself no better, was preferred to every other in the tribe of Judah, nay, in the land of Canaan: "Unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose, *out of all your tribes*, to put his name there,—thither thou shalt come<sup>z</sup>." If their ritual worship, though conformable to the divine institution in every other respect, wanted this single requisite of being offered at this place, they were assured that it would be totally unacceptable<sup>a</sup>. When the LORD distinguished the tribe of Judah, by putting his name in Jerusalem, it was in the way of rejecting every place in the tribe of Ephraim, within the boundaries of which his tabernacle had stood for many ages. "He refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: but chose the tribe of Judah, the Mount Zion which he

<sup>x</sup> Deut. xii. 12.<sup>y</sup> Gen. xxii. 2.; 2 Chron. iii. 1.<sup>z</sup> Deut. xii. 5.<sup>a</sup> Deut. xii. 11, 13, 14.

“ he loved <sup>b</sup>. ” Why did he prefer Judah to Ephraim, Jerusalem to Shiloh ? In Shiloh, indeed, his ordinances had been profaned. But he knew that this would soon be the case in Jerusalem also. We can give no reason for the preference, but that which God himself gives. This was his own pleasure. “ The LORD hath chosen Zion ; he hath “ desired it for his habitation. This is my rest “ for ever : here will I dwell, *for I have desired “ it* <sup>c</sup>. ”

14. The same sovereignty appears in the *means* or *instruments* which God employs for accomplishing his purposes either of *judgment* or of *mercy*.

It would naturally occur to us, that when God meant to punish a people for their wickedness, he would employ instruments prepared for the work by a love of righteousness ; that the innocent should wield the weapons of his vengeance against the guilty, the sincere against the hypocritical, the humble against the haughty, and the merciful against those “ who breathe out cruelty.” But “ his ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our “ thoughts.” He often takes a plan directly the reverse of that which would be supposed, or approved, by us. He employs the worst of men for the best of purposes. He takes instruments out of the devil’s hand for performing his own work. He lets loose hell, that it may fight the battles of heaven. Short-sighted creatures are in danger of denying the work to be his, because they do not immediately discern his hand ; because they discern

no

<sup>b</sup> Psal. lxxviii. 68, 69.

<sup>c</sup> Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14.



no hand save that of his enemies. But they consider not, that while the work is as really his own, as if instruments more apparently suited to it were employed, there is a more striking display of his wisdom and power, in making the very wrath of man to praise him, and in restraining the remainder of it. They have not learned, from the Sacred History, that this is the most ordinary method of the divine procedure. When God had a work of judgment to execute on the devoted family of the wicked Ahab<sup>d</sup>, he employed an instrument little better than himself<sup>e</sup>, and in one respect worse<sup>f</sup>. Jehu, not only an idolater, but a vile hypocrite, is the man singled out from all the tribes of Israel for accomplishing God's work of vengeance on the house of Ahab.

In this very way hath God often punished his Church. Was not Sennacherib, an ambitious and blood-thirsty tyrant, the person selected as the instrument by whom JEHOVAH was "to perform his whole work on Mount Zion, and on Jerusalem<sup>g</sup>?" Here, we find a heathen employed against hypocritical professors; a blasphemer of the true God used as "the rod of his anger." He, who dared to call the God of Jerusalem an idol, receives a commission from him to punish his own people<sup>h</sup>. Does he not design the vain-glorious Nebuchadnezzar his servant, even when seeking the destruction of Judah? Hear, how he speaks by his prophet: "Behold, I will send and  
" take

d 2 Kings ix. 7.

e 2 Kings x. 31.

f Ver. 16.

g Isa. x. 12.

h Ver. 5.—11.



“take all the families of the north, faith the  
 “LORD, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Baby-  
 “lon my servant, and will bring them against  
 “this land, and against the inhabitants thereof,—  
 “and will utterly destroy them, and make them  
 “an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual  
 “desolations <sup>i</sup>.”

In the same sovereign way, does he fulfil his purposes of *mercy*. Sometimes, he employs *good* men in the work. He had a branch of his Church even in Sodom. For the deliverance of righteous Lot, Abraham obtains victory over four kings <sup>k</sup>. “Who raised up the righteous man from the  
 “east, called him to his foot, gave the nations be-  
 “fore him, and made him rule over kings? He  
 “gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven  
 “stubble to his bow. He pursued them, and pas-  
 “sed safely, even by the way that he had not  
 “gone with his feet <sup>l</sup>.” At other times he employs *wicked* men. He had made heathens the instruments of punishing his people, and heathens are employed as the instruments of their deliverance. Cyrus knew as little of the true God as Sennacherib or Nebuchadnezzar. But God raises him up, and gives him all his power and success for this very end, that he might liberate his Church. He had called the king of Babylon his *servant*. But he calls the conqueror of Babylon his *anointed* <sup>m</sup>. He gives him a more honourable epithet, because he called him to more honourable work, to work  
 typical

<sup>i</sup> Jer. xxv. 9.

<sup>k</sup> Gen. xiv. 15.

<sup>l</sup> Isa. xli. 2, 3.

<sup>m</sup> Isa. xlv. 1.—5.

typical of that which was to be performed by his true Anointed. He extends this honour to the very army that Cyrus commanded. They were to be the instruments of accomplishing his purposes with respect to Babylon. Therefore, although an assemblage of heathens, he describes them as sanctified, or set apart to this work, by himself. Although they knew not that God who strengthened them, he calls them his "mighty ones." He speaks of them as "rejoicing in "his highness," or "glory," because they rejoiced in that work which was to terminate in his glory, although they were ignorant of this<sup>n</sup>.

Notwithstanding the honourable epithets thus bestowed on Cyrus and his army, with respect to their work; a very different picture is given of both, when their own character and designs are taken into consideration. They are exhibited as "a cruel people, that will not shew mercy," as "having no pity on the fruit of the womb, and "whose eye should not spare children<sup>o</sup>." Cyrus himself gets no better character than that of a bird of prey. While JEHOVAH appeals to the immutability and absolute sovereignty of his purpose, as an incontrovertible evidence of his being the only true God; he at the same proclaims his almighty power in the manner of accomplishing it. "I am God, and there is none else,—declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, "saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all  
" my

<sup>n</sup> Isa. xiii. 3.—5.

<sup>o</sup> Ver. 18.; Jer. I. 42.

“ my pleasure : calling a ravenous bird from the  
 “ east, the man that executeth my counsel from a  
 “ far country : yea, I have spoken it, I will also  
 “ bring it to pass ; I have purposed it, I will also  
 “ do it <sup>p.</sup>” Behold the sovereignty of God ! He  
 who “ called the righteous man from the east,”  
 is the same who “ called a ravenous bird from  
 “ the east :” and both for the same work of liber-  
 rating his captives. Both are under his direc-  
 tion, and in the calling of both he displays equal  
 righteousness. For he saith of Cyrus, “ I have  
 “ raised him up in righteousness <sup>q.</sup>”

Did the Lord destroy literal Babylon by means  
 of “ a ravenous bird ?” Did he do it in righte-  
 ousness ? Need we wonder, then, though he should  
 observe the same course, in accomplishing the de-  
 struction of mystical Babylon, of which the other  
 was only a type ? though he “ cry to all the  
 “ *fowls* that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and  
 “ gather yourselves together unto the supper of  
 “ the great God <sup>r</sup> ?” Although, in the destruction  
 of Babylon, God should employ men as irreligious  
 as the heathen, or more so, as merciless as the  
 Medes ; we must not therefore either deny, or be  
 prejudiced against his work. The wickedness of  
 the instruments is wholly their own. Whatever  
 God does by them, he does it “ in righteous-  
 “ ness,”—Yet mark his language ; “ I will stir  
 “ up the Medes against them :—their bows also  
 “ shall dash the young men to pieces, and they  
 “ shall have no pity <sup>s.</sup>” “ The LORD hath raised  
 “ up

<sup>p</sup> Isa. xlv. 9.—11.

<sup>q</sup> Isa. xlv. 13.

<sup>r</sup> Rev. xix. 17.

<sup>s</sup> Isa. xlii. 17.

“ up the spirit of the kings of the Medes : for  
 “ his desire is against Babylon, to destroy it : be-  
 “ cause it is the vengeance of the LORD, the ven-  
 “ geance of his temple †.”

God often gives a striking display of his sovereignty in punishing sin by sin. He does so in various ways. He makes one sin its own punishment. He punishes one sin by another committed by the same person. Or, he punishes the sin of one person, by means of a sin committed by another. As virtue is its own reward, in as far as “ the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace ;” sin often proves its own punishment, in that misery which it brings along with it, as inseparable from its nature. Ahab’s covetousness, in desiring the vineyard of Naboth, was undoubtedly his sin. But it was as certainly his punishment. For he “ was heavy and displeased,—and laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread †.” The pride of Haman was also its own punishment. For notwithstanding his great honours, he says ; “ All this availeth me nothing, as long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate †.”

Sometimes, he punishes a former sin by one that succeeds it. The sin of Judas, in betraying his Master, was punished by his being left to become his own murderer. The Gentiles provoked God by their idolatry, in “ changing the glory of  
 “ the uncorruptible God into an image made like

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“ unto

† Jer. li 11.

u 1 Kings xxi. 1.—4.

Ezra v. 13.

“unto corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.” Now, mark their punishment. “*Wherefore* God also gave them up to uncleanness.” And again; “Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge,” or, “in acknowledgment, God gave them over to a reprobate mind <sup>w</sup>.”

He also punishes the sin of one person by that of another. The sin of David in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba, was punished by the incest of Absalom. Therefore the Lord sent this message to David: “Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun <sup>x</sup>.”

In a word, the God of infinite holiness often uses Satan himself as his instrument. Thus we read, that, when he was plaguing the Egyptians, he “sent evil angels among them <sup>y</sup>.” He permitted him to act as a lying spirit in the mouth of the false prophets of Ahab, when he was about to accomplish the destruction of this wicked prince. He even employs him as an instrument for chastening his own people. Job was in part subjected to his power. We read of a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had long bound. And the general experience of the Church concurs with the

w Rom. i. 23, 24. 28.

x 2 Sam. xii. 11, 12.

y Psal. lxxviii. 49.



the testimony of inspiration, in assuring us, that when a loving father means to humble and prove his own children, he often subjects them to severe discipline, by means of the temptations of this cruel one.

From these reflections we may learn, that we ought never to judge of a work merely from the means or instruments employed. Did we follow this rule, we would be at times in danger of mistaking God's work for the devil's, and the devil's for God's. Often God is doing his own work, when the carnal eye can perceive nothing but the sad working of human corruptions. And often the devil is doing his, when "transformed into "an angel of light," and coming with such "deceivableness of unrighteousness," that "even the children of God may be in part deceived." It is not to the outward aspect of Providence that we are to look for direction; but "to the law, "and to the testimony." Let us also beware of undervaluing his work, because of the instruments. This is an homage that he claims to his sovereignty, that we should not presume to limit him. For "as the heavens are above the earth, "so are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts "above our thoughts."

15. The same sovereignty appears in the distribution of *natural gifts*. One "rejoiceth in "his strength." The life of another is a constant struggle with constitutional imbecility. One is distinguished for the gift of prudence; while indiscretion is the characteristic of another. Rea-

son, in one, seems to vie with the intellect of angels; in another, it scarcely equals animal instinct. Whence proceeds this astonishing difference? We must not deny the operation of secondary causes. But it must be ultimately resolved into the sovereign will of that Lord who “giveth to one five talents, to another two, and to another one.”

16. The same thing appears from the whole management of our *lot*. Our very use of this word, with respect to human concerns, contains a virtual acknowledgment of divine sovereignty. Some, indeed, prefer other terms, which as they are more allied to the language of heathens, are too often used to convey similar sentiments. They talk of their *luck*, or their *fortune*. But the former is that which is consecrated by the Spirit of God. Thus did David the Type, nay, the glorious Antitype, express himself: “Thou maintainest my *lot*.” Nor did either of these distinguished persons confine this language to the great and leading circumstances of life. For it is added, without any limitation; “The *lines* are fallen unto me in pleasant places<sup>b</sup>.”

Nothing may seem more to depend on chance, or on the most trivial causes, than the place of our residence on this earth. Yet we are assured that God “hath determined the bounds of our *habitation*.” It is wholly the result of his sovereign will, that one is placed “in the valley of vision;” and that another “sits in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death.”

Scarcely

Scarcely in any respect does the exercise of this perfection more remarkably appear, than in the distribution of the enjoyments of this life. We see one born a beggar, and another a prince; or one, who is born a beggar, advanced "to sit with princes." On the other hand, one who has had the most honourable nativity, is sometimes brought down to the lowest station in society. It is undeniable, that much depends on second causes. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich," while "the soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing." But do we not often observe, that those who have equal advantages, and equal industry, have very unequal success? Perhaps, you may have marked one, whose circumstances were originally the same with those of another, who was not inferior in capacity, in diligence, or in frugality, who was employed in the very same line. Yet with the one every thing has been unprosperous, while riches have flowed on the other. Nay, do we not sometimes see a person who possesses far less understanding, and discovers far less industry than another, prosper in all that he undertakes, while every attempt fails with the other? In common language, men confess their inability to account for the difference. They call the latter an *unfortunate* man. But we must trace matters to another source, to the overruling providence of that God who manages all the concerns of men as he pleases. We must remember that he not only gives the means of becoming rich, but that it depends upon his pleasure to give success to these means; that while "the rich and

“ poor meet together ; the LORD is the maker of  
 “ them all <sup>d</sup>.” The Israelites, therefore, are warn-  
 ed that it would be viewed as an evidence of their  
 “ heart forgetting the LORD their God,” if they  
 said, “ My power, and the might of my hand  
 “ hath gotten me this wealth.” They are com-  
 manded, on the contrary, to “ remember that the  
 “ LORD their God gave them power to get  
 “ wealth <sup>e</sup>.” Let us listen to the estimate of the  
 wise man. “ I saw under the sun, that the race  
 “ is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong,  
 “ neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to  
 “ men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of  
 “ skill, but time and chance happeneth to them  
 “ all <sup>f</sup>.” Does he here ascribe to mere accident  
 what he denies to second causes? No, surely :  
 He only calls our attention to what appears as  
 chance to unthinking man, but must indeed be  
 ascribed to the invisible yet certain influence of  
 the First Cause.

The divine pleasure regulates our lot as to the  
 duration of life. Each of us may say with the  
 Psalmist, “ My times are in thy hand <sup>g</sup>.” For  
 God “ hath determined not only the bounds of our  
 “ habitation,” but “ the times before appointed <sup>h</sup>.”  
 One opens his eyes on the light of life, only that  
 he may close them in death ; another is cut off in  
 childhood ; a third, amidst all the gaieties of youth.  
 Some are struck down in the prime of life ; while  
 others are spared, till “ the grasshopper is a bur-  
 “ den.”

How

<sup>d</sup> Prov. xxii. 2.

<sup>g</sup> Psal. xxxi. 15.

<sup>e</sup> Deut. viii. 14. 17, 18.

<sup>h</sup> Acts xvii. 26.

<sup>f</sup> Eccles. ix. 11.

How much does this sovereignty appear in the manner in which life is terminated ! “ One dieth “ in his full strength, being wholly at ease and “ quiet : His breasts are full of milk, and his “ bones are moistened with marrow : and another “ dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never “ eateth with pleasure .”

17. We cannot consider the *afflictions* of the people of God, without admiring his sovereignty. This character appears written on his conduct, whether we compare the situation of one Christian with that of another, or the sufferings of the righteous in general with those of the wicked. Do we compare the situation of one of the children of God with that of another ; we perceive great reason humbly to adore his sovereignty. One has a great share of prosperity. He enjoys the blessing of health. His family increases. He is favoured, not with abundance only, but with affluence. His “ barns are filled with “ plenty, and his presses burst with new wine.” Another long outlives the rest of his family, only to languish under disease, and to struggle with the most abject poverty. He is singled out as an example of what almighty power can accomplish, in supporting under the severest pressure of affliction. At his expence, the Supreme Disposer teaches other Christians, what he has a right to do with them, if he pleases.

If we compare the situation of the wicked with that of the righteous, we must often observe, that the former enjoy a far greater share of prosperity

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than



than the latter. It is impossible, at any rate, to judge of a man's state for eternity from his external circumstances. For "the righteous, and the  
 " wife, and their works, are in the hand of God :  
 " no man knoweth love or hatred, by all that is  
 " before them. All things come alike to all, there  
 " is one event to the righteous and to the wicked,  
 " to the good, and to the clean, and to the un-  
 " clean <sup>k</sup>." While this ordination is an argument for a future state of retribution, it at the same time bears a striking impress of divine sovereignty.

18. If we attend to the dispensations of his providence with respect to the *kingdoms of this world*, we perceive the same character, only on a larger scale. Nations are disposed of in the same manner as individuals. God raises up a nation from small beginnings, gives it power and extent of dominion, brings it to the zenith of its glory, and at length hurls it into destruction. His sovereign pleasure is that awful die by which the fate of empires is determined. It is he who " speaks  
 " concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom,  
 " to build and to plant it." To him it equally belongs to " speak concerning a nation, and con-  
 " cerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull  
 " down, and to destroy it <sup>l</sup>." What the heathen fabled concerning their Neptune, is true of our God. He " sitteth upon the flood," whether natural or political. " The LORD sitteth King for  
 " ever." Indeed, we may still perceive the operation of second causes, in one shape or another. Wisdom and valour are means of aggrandizement.

Luxury,

<sup>k</sup> Eccles. ix. 1, 2.

<sup>l</sup> Jer. xviii. 7. 9.

Luxury, pride, and the counsels of folly, conspire to accomplish the fall of a nation. But these secondary causes are pre-ordained, managed, and overruled by God, for the fulfilment of his own purposes. So strongly was Babylon fortified, that it does not appear that Cyrus could have taken it in the ordinary way of attack. But the watchmen neglected to shut the gates on that night in which Belsazzar made his feast; when, as would seem, dissipation had diffused its influence over the whole city. This secondary cause, however, the negligence of the watchmen, was immediately under the direction of God. For, several hundred years before, he had said; “The gates shall “not be shut<sup>m</sup>.” Nebuchadnezzar was one of those arrogant worms who vie with God for the honour of sovereignty.—He flattered himself, in consequence of his extensive conquests, that it was *his* prerogative to dispose of kingdoms, and of nations. But God, to teach this haughty monarch that the work was wholly his own, levels him with the brute creation; and as he declares the awful event before it takes place, he at the same time informs Nebuchadnezzar, that it was the design of this judgment, that he might “know that “the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, “and giveth it to whomsoever he will<sup>n</sup>.”

19. As sovereignty is the attribute of our Lord Jesus Christ, he displays it in the management of his *spiritual kingdom*. He selected three disciples from the rest to be witnesses of his glorious transfiguration<sup>o</sup>. The same disciples also had the distinguishing

<sup>m</sup> Isa. xlv. 1.

<sup>n</sup> Dan. iv. 30.—32.

<sup>o</sup> Mat. xvii. 1.

tinguishing honour of witnessing his gréat humiliation <sup>p</sup>. The rest had no right to say to him, Wherefore is this distinction? They could not accuse him of partiality. For he may dispense his favours to whomsoever he will.—He wrought miracles, as the fruit of his sovereign pleasure. When the leper came to him, saying, “ Lord, if “ thou wilt, thou canst make me clean ;” he acknowledged the justness of the ascription, and in confirmation of it accomplished his cure. He replied, “ I will ; be thou clean <sup>q</sup>.” Now, as all the miracles which Christ wrought on the bodies of men, are signs of the miracles of grace which he works on their souls ; the analogy is lost, if he is not equally sovereign in the latter. Is the removal of the bodily leprosy a symbol of the cure of the more fatal leprosy of sin? And can the latter be the fruit of the sinner’s will, while the former depends on the will of God ?

Christ sovereignly dispenses *gifts* to his Church, whether ordinary or extraordinary. “ He gave “ some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, “ evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers <sup>r</sup>.” A pastor had no right to complain that he was not an evangelist ; nor an evangelist, that he was not endowed with the gifts of a prophet ; nor a prophet, that he had not an apostolic mission. For faith the apostle ; “ Unto every one of us is given “ grace, according to the measure of the gift of “ Christ <sup>s</sup> ;” that is, just as he is pleased to give. Elsewhere,

<sup>p</sup> Mat. xxvi. 36, 37.

<sup>q</sup> Chap. viii. 2, 3.

<sup>r</sup> Eph. iv. 11.

<sup>s</sup> Ver. 7.

Elsewhere, this is attributed to the sovereign dispensation of the Spirit of Christ. “To one is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues. But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. —Now hath God set the members, every one of them in the body, as it pleased him.—And God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets<sup>t</sup>,” &c.

The Head of the Church displays the same sovereignty in regard to that measure of *success* which he gives his servants in his work. It has been often seen, that the most able and laborious have had reason to complain that they “have laboured in vain;” while those, who have not equalled them in either of these respects, have been far more successful. A schismatical spirit early discovered itself in the Church. One preferred Paul to Apollos; another, Apollos to Paul; and a third, Cephas to both. Their pretence for such a preference, was the benefit they had received by the ministry of one or other of these. But the apostle shows the folly of such conduct, from a consideration of the sovereignty of God, as the only reason of the success of his servants. “Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by  
“whom

“whom ye believed, even as the Lord *gave* to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God *gave* the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that *giveth* the increase.”

20. God often displays his justice in giving up men to *obduracy* of heart. But this is also represented as the effect of his sovereignty. While he “hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, whom he will he hardeneth.” I do not immediately speak of that hardening which respects the eternal state, but of that only which has a reference to temporal calamities. This, as we have formerly seen, is the ultimate reason given for the conduct of the Canaanites, in not making peace with Israel. With respect to the two sons of Eli, we are informed that “they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them.” When the Israelites applied to Rehoboam for a redress of grievances, he refused it; and the matter is thus accounted for, in the language of inspiration; “Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which he spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.” In our meditations on the divine influence on the hearts of men, we must still remember that the moral evil of their actions proceeds solely from themselves. But it is evident that the passages quoted,

u 1 Cor. iii. 5.—7.

v Rom. ix. 18.

w 1 Sam. ii. 25.

x 1 Kings xii. 15.



quoted, if they have any meaning at all, express such an operation, on the part of God, as renders the event absolutely certain. Although the manner of this operation, in its whole compass, be inconceivable to us, we cannot deny the truth of it, without denying that divine revelation is to be understood according to the ordinary sense of language.

It may be observed, lastly, that some of the most severe *judgments* that have ever been inflicted on men, have been expressly inflicted for their *denial* of divine sovereignty. This, as we have seen, was the cause of the unexampled punishment of Nebuchadnezzar. But he is by no means a singular instance. What was it that so greatly provoked the LORD in the conduct of Korah, Dathan and Abiram? Wherefore did he “make a new thing,” by causing “the earth to open her mouth, and swallow them up,” that they should “go down quick into the pit?” Was it because they merely found fault with Moses and Aaron? No. It was because they dared to dispute the divine sovereignty, in *choosing* these persons to the offices assigned them. They said to Moses and Aaron, “Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy every one of them.” What did Moses reply? To-morrow the LORD will shew who are his, and “who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even *him whom he hath chosen* will he cause to come near unto him<sup>2</sup>.” The

LORD

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xvi. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Ver. 3. 5.

LORD knew that the murmurings of these rebels, although immediately directed against Moses and Aaron, were ultimately levelled against his own sovereign ordination. Therefore he says; "It shall come to pass, that the man's rod whom I shall choose shall blossom: and I will make to cease *from me* the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur *against you* <sup>a</sup>." Sennacherib was only the ax, the saw, the rod and the staff in God's hand. This instrument, however, presumed to deny the Supreme Agent. The king of Assyria claimed the work as his own. He said, "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom: for I am prudent." But observe how his conduct is described by JEHOVAH, and how he determines to punish it. "Shall the ax boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood. Therefore shall the LORD, the LORD of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness, and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire. And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day <sup>b</sup>." He trusted in the strength of his army, and this prophecy refers to its sudden and miraculous destruction <sup>c</sup>. But this was not all his punishment. It is farther expressed in this

<sup>a</sup> Numb. xvii. 5.

<sup>b</sup> Isa. x. 15.—17.

<sup>c</sup> Isa. xxxvii. 36.

this emphatic language; "Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way that thou camest<sup>d</sup>." Formerly he was represented as a mean instrument in the hand of the Almighty. Now, because of his refractoriness, he appears as a wild beast, bridled and muzzled by his owner, and driven whithersoever he will.

In a word, the punishment of those who have enjoyed the gospel, seems, in a peculiar manner, to turn on this hinge. The enemies of the King are those "who would not that he should reign over them<sup>e</sup>." All, indeed, who refuse to obey the law, or to submit to the gospel, in whatever way, are the enemies of Christ. But those especially deserve this character, who deny the sovereignty of his will. For the right of dispensing his gifts to whom, and in what manner he pleases, of doing according to his will in heaven and in earth, is that branch of his prerogative which eminently entitles him to the designation of "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

From what has been observed on this subject, we are taught the *reasonableness* of *submitting* to the divine *will*. God is the Supreme Potter, and has an undoubted right to do with the clay as he pleases. - Whatever he does, he does it with his own.

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<sup>d</sup> Isa. xxxvii. 29.

<sup>e</sup> Luke xix. 27.

We may also perceive the *wisdom* of this submission. For “who hath resisted his will.” He “worketh, and no one can let him.” A sinner may spurn and tofs at divine sovereignty; but it is only as “a wild bull in a net.” It is impossible that he can “flee out of his hand.” The preceding illustrations assure us, that the impotent creature must eventually submit. Like the king of Babylon, he may find it necessary to confess this attribute, from that conviction which is the fruit of better experience. For God “will do all “his pleasure.”

A due attention to divine sovereignty affords *consolation* under the greatest adversities. The Christian has still reason to rejoice, that nothing happens to him by chance, or merely by the will of man. He may have reason to blame himself, or to blame others, as secondary causes. But he knows that he must not rest here, lest he should seem to reflect on the First Cause. How much soever he may regret any adverse event, he discerns the propriety of submission. For he knows that he might as well think of plucking the sun out of the firmament, as of counteracting any of the determinations of that God whose “counsel shall stand.” The tidings delivered by Samuel to Eli must have been afflicting beyond conception. Yet this is all his answer; “It is the “LORD, let him do what seemeth him good <sup>f</sup>.” When Paul declared his intention of going up to Jerusalem, Agabus, by the spirit of prophecy, as-

sured

<sup>f</sup> 1 Sam. iii. 18.

ured him, that in this case he should be delivered bound into the hands of the Gentiles. On this prediction, the disciples besought him with tears, that he would relinquish his design. But when they found that he persisted in it, they “ceased;” “saying, The will of the Lord be done g.” They perceived by his firmness, as connected with the prophetic warning of Agabus, that his mind was under a superior influence. Above all, it affords consolation to the Christian, that this irresistible will is that of a Father, who can do him no injury, who will assuredly make all things work together for his good. Thus, when we pray that his “will may be done,” we are commanded to view him as “our Father.”

This doctrine gives us an affecting view of our own *meannefs* in the sight of God. We see the Supreme Agent, in his sovereign dispensation, treating men as “dust and ashes.” Good reason have we therefore to abase ourselves at his footstool, to entertain the most humiliating thoughts of all that we are and possess, and to join in the confession of Nebuchadnezzar: “All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing.” Whence proceeded this language, so different from what he once held? Merely from a view of divine sovereignty as wonderfully exemplified on himself.

We also learn the necessity of humble *adoration*. “With God is terrible majesty:” and it

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eminently



eminently appears in this, that “ he giveth not  
“ account of any of his matters.”

In fine, we might safely conclude, that the sovereignty of God could not but signally *appear* in the work of our *redemption*, even although it were less expressly revealed. We perceive this character indelibly impressed on the works of nature. It is the turning hinge of the whole work of Providence. What is this, but a continued execution of the sovereign and immutable will of JEHOVAH? Is not the whole history of mankind a commentary on this perfection? Can we suppose, then, that there is a thick veil thrown over it, in the greatest of all the works of God? The kingdoms of this world have only been monumental pillars for recording its glory. Many of them lie in ruins. But the legend is perfectly distinct. As it was written in their elevation, it is equally written in their fall. This divine character eminently appears in the typical kingdom of Israel; in its formation, and in its administration. And is it lost in the antitype? Is that kingdom which shall never have an end, and which shall break down every thing that opposes it, the only one in which this unalienable attribute of its Sovereign is not discernible? Those who entertain this idea, have a very different view of matters from that illustrious minister of this kingdom, the apostle Paul: “ It is not of  
“ him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but  
“ of God that sheweth mercy.” Their ideas of this kingdom run directly counter to those of the  
glorious

glorious Sovereign, who thus addresses the Father : “ Thou hast hid these things from the wise  
“ and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes.  
“ Even so, Father ; *for so it seemed good in thy*  
*“ sight.”*

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## SECTION IX.

*Of Divine Providence.—General Observations.—*

*A Particular Providence proved, from the Means employed by God ;—from the Concatenation of Circumstances ;—the Season of Operation ;—the Discovery of Secret Sin ;—the Resemblance between Sin and Punishment ;—the Choice of Instruments for punishing Iniquity ;—the Circumstances of Punishment ;—Events of a Contingent Nature.*

WE have already seen, that the sacred volume contains an history of Providence. This includes so great a variety of particulars, that, in so short a sketch as that designed in this work, I can scarcely enter on it. But as the subject is of the greatest importance, it may not be improper to take notice of a few things with respect to the doctrine of Providence in general ; and also briefly to shew, that this providential operation is of a most particular nature.

I shall, *first*, make a few observations with respect to Providence in general.

1. The Providence of God is merely the execution of his eternal and unalterable *purpose*, as to all those creatures which he hath brought into being. As the God of Providence, “his kingdom ruleth over all.—The eyes of all things wait upon him.” Whether his operation respect men or angels, individuals or kingdoms; whatsoever he doth, it is for the completion of his eternal and immutable will of purpose. “He *doth* according to his *will* in the army of heaven; and among the inhabitants of the earth <sup>b</sup>.”—He “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will <sup>i</sup>.” When the ten tribes had withdrawn from their allegiance to the house of David, and the men of Judah and Benjamin were assembled to fight against them, “to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam,” they received this warning from God; “Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house, for the thing is *from me* <sup>k</sup>.”

2. The inspired history of providential operation discovers the true *cause* of human *prosperity*. Men greatly err on this subject. If, either as individuals, or in a collective capacity, they enjoy the smiles of prosperity; they generally consider these as the fruit of their own exertions. They say, “Mine own arm hath gotten me all this wealth.” They arrogate the honour of that Babylon they have built, to “the might of their

<sup>b</sup> Dan. iv. 35.

<sup>i</sup> Eph. i. 11.

<sup>k</sup> 1 Kings xii. 21.—24.

“their power ;” although as its name is, it often eventually proves their *confusion*. Where a natural man would have discerned no other cause but human prudence in complying with a favourable proposal, the pious steward of Abraham’s house perceived and acknowledged the hand of God. “The LORD,” said he, “hath prospered my way.” We may remark, indeed, that those are most likely to observe the divine operation consequentially, who are sincerely concerned to acknowledge God in all their ways, and previously to seek a display of his hand. Such was the conduct of this excellent servant. He was eager to know “whether “the LORD had made his journey prosperous or “not.” He accordingly remarked the various steps of Providence ; his being led in the right way to the house of his master’s brethren, the appearance of Rebekah, the exact correspondence between her language and conduct, and what had previously been the matter of his prayer : and on all these accounts he blessed the LORD God of his master Abraham <sup>k</sup>. This is truly a most beautiful, interesting and instructive history. It contains a striking picture of the character, and a practical demonstration of the worth, of a faithful messenger ; who, while he zealously served man, had his eye principally directed to God.

We learn whence Joseph “was a prosperous “man.” This is the reason assigned ; “The “LORD was with him <sup>l</sup>.” The hand of God is sometimes so very evident in this respect, that it

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<sup>k</sup> Gen. xxiv. 42.—48. 56.<sup>l</sup> Gen. xxxix. 2.

is observed even by unrenewed men, or by such as are strangers to divine revelation. Laban made this acknowledgment to Jacob ; “ I have learned “ by experience, that the LORD hath blessed me “ for thy sake <sup>m</sup>.” Potiphar, Joseph’s master, “ saw that the LORD was with him, and that the “ LORD made all that he did to prosper in his “ hand <sup>n</sup>.”

Because the event depends on divine Providence, means are not therefore to be neglected. For in this, as in his other operations, God is pleased to put honour on these. But while diligent in the use of lawful means, we must wholly depend on God for the success. For his blessing alone can make them effectual.

3. We also discover the *cause* of *adversity*. We find that affliction riseth not out of the ground ; that trouble springeth not from the dust ; that this evil never exists, “ and the LORD hath “ not done it.” By the Sacred History, we are taught to acknowledge the hand of God in every species of adversity. Even in those things which are viewed as the common accidents of life, we are directed to the supreme cause. While every thing prospers with one, another is thwarted in all his undertakings, and eventually oppressed with poverty. Hannah, in her song of praise, unravels this mystery. “ The LORD maketh poor, and maketh “ rich : he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth “ up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the “ beggar from the dunghill, to set them among “ princes, and to make them inherit the throne of “ glory :



“glory : for the pillars of the earth are the  
“ LORD’s, and he hath set the world upon them.”

God hath never meant that the dispensations of his Providence should be viewed as a certain test of his love or hatred. In this respect it is said, that “one event happeneth to all.” We accordingly find, that prosperity is often showered on the wicked, whom the LORD hateth ; while the objects of his eternal and unalterable love are visited with severe affliction. At the same time it appears from particular instances, that even temporal prosperity is sometimes meant as a token of God’s approbation of the conduct of persons or nations, while adversity hath a contrary language. Concerning Uzziah king of Judah it is said, that “as long as he fought the LORD, God  
“ made him to prosper <sup>p</sup>.” We have many proofs that righteousness alone “exalteth a nation.” The children of Israel still prospered, while they adhered to their God : and when they returned to him, after their apostacies, he still delivered them.

In many instances, we cannot certainly know the design of affliction with respect to individuals. For in this respect, as has been formerly observed, the LORD often displays his sovereignty ; or he severely chastises, because he hath a secret purpose of love, and hath determined to make the greatest afflictions “work together for  
“ good.” But the design is often expressly declared in Scripture, or, as may be seen after-

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wards,

wards, most clearly expressed in the peculiar nature of the dispensation. As to national calamities, we are left in no hesitation. Sin is still pointed out as the procuring cause.

We learn that “ fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind, fulfil his word <sup>q</sup>.” But the general doctrine is illustrated by many particular instances. The cities of the plain were destroyed by fire from the LORD. “ Fire and hail” were among the plagues of Egypt <sup>r</sup>. Hailstones were the instruments of divine vengeance against the Amorites, when their five kings gathered their forces against Gibeon <sup>s</sup>. When God “ causeth “ his vapours to ascend,” he “ proclaims liberty “ to the pestilence <sup>t</sup>.” When he blows with his wind, “ his enemies sink as lead in the mighty “ waters <sup>u</sup>.” When the earth opens her mouth, and like a cruel mother devours her own brood ; whatever be the influence of secondary causes, we are taught to view this awful calamity as a visitation for sin <sup>v</sup>. When God “ calls for famine,” or “ turneth the fruitful land into barrenness, it is for the wickedness of them that “ dwell therein <sup>w</sup>.” Men may philosophically descant on the rise and fall of empires. They may ascribe these to accident, or to causes merely of a political nature. But although there is a subordinate operation of secondary causes, we are assured from the word of God, that these events must be ultimately ascribed to his operation as

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q Psal. cxlviii. 8.

r Exod. ix. 3.

s Josh. x. 11.

t Jer. xxxiv. 17.

u Exod. xv. 10.

v Isa. xxix. 6.

w Psal. cvii. 34.

“the Governor among the nations.” We must not, indeed, lose sight of divine sovereignty. But we do not recollect an instance in which the overthrow of rulers, or the desolation of kingdoms, is not represented as immediately the effect of vengeance for sin. As it is God who “putteth down one, and setteth up another,” the reason is thus assigned ;—“For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red ; it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same : but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them.” When God gave a commission to Israel to exterminate the nations of Canaan, it was, as has been seen, because of their atrocious iniquity. Therefore did “the land itself vomit out her inhabitants.” It was not so much the power of the Persians, as the guilt of the Babylonians, that overthrew their extensive empire. The holy and just God had said ; “I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity ; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.”

Nor do we merely learn from the sacred records, that wickedness in general procures punishment from God. We have a particular account of many sins, which bring grievous calamities, or complete destruction on a people : and the fatal effects of these are illustrated by facts.

Besides

z Psal. lxxv. 7, 9.

y Lev. xviii. 25.

'z Isa. xlii. 11.

Besides unnatural lust, pride, luxury and idleness are mentioned in the bill of indictment found against Sodom, and referred to by the Supreme Judge for alarming Jerusalem: "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom. Pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and her daughters;—therefore I took them away as I saw good <sup>a</sup>." Similar is the charge exhibited against Tyrus and her prince. "Take up a lamentation for Tyrus, and say unto Tyrus, O thou that art situate at the entry of the sea, which art a merchant of the people for many isles, Thus saith the LORD God, O Tyrus, thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty.—" —Say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the LORD God, Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a god, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas.—Behold, therefore, I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the death of them that are slain in the midst of the seas <sup>b</sup>."

Carnal confidence is a sin nearly connected with those already mentioned: and is pointed out in Scripture as hastening the destruction of a people. Moab trusted in her works, and in her treasures; therefore she was taken, and the  
spoilers

<sup>a</sup> Ezek. xvi. 49, 50.

<sup>b</sup> Ezek. xxvii. 2. 3.; xxviii. 2. 7, 8.

spoilers came upon every city<sup>c</sup>. Not to mention a variety of other iniquities, uncleanness, pride, luxury, and carnal confidence, are eminently chargeable against Britain as a nation: and when we consider both the threatenings, and the examples of God's severity recorded in Scripture, we have great reason to be afraid of his judgments. Our guilt is far more aggravated than that of Moab, of Tyre, or even of Sodom; because of our unspeakably superior privileges.

The plagues of Egypt, and the destruction of Pharaoh with his host, proclaim the danger of unbelief, and of hardening our hearts against the testimony of God. They at the same time display his holy jealousy with respect to his people, and declare the certainty of the destruction of those who continue to oppress and persecute them. The oppression of the people of God has often proved the crowning guilt of a nation, that by which the cup of her iniquity was filled, and the immediate cause of the cup of trembling being put into her hand. This was the case with Babylon. Hence this aggravated guilt is mentioned, as if it had been the only procuring cause of the destruction of this great empire. God puts this language into the mouth of his oppressed Church: "The violence done to me, and to my  
" flesh, be upon Babylon, and my blood upon the  
" inhabitants of Chaldea<sup>d</sup>."

The inspired history of Providence affords light by which we may form a true estimate of those  
wars

<sup>c</sup> Jer. xlviii. 7, 8.

<sup>d</sup> Jer. li. 35.



wars that desolate the earth. The reasons assigned for them by nations are generally doubtful, often false. They may plead the love of liberty, while the genuine principle is ambition ; or zeal for religion, while they are solely concerned about their temporal interest ; or urge the plea of self-defence, while actuated by insatiable avarice, or cruel revenge. But whatever be the motives assigned by the contending parties, or by which they are really influenced ; whatever be the causes from which war more immediately proceeds ; we certainly know, that, as permitted by God, it is a punishment inflicted on all who are engaged in it. Some have not blushed to vindicate war, as necessary to prevent the too great increase of the human species. “ Wars and fightings” not only proceed from men’s lusts, but are designed by the Supreme Ruler for the punishment of these. This is one of the scourges that he employs, to remind guilty man of a state of retribution. We may therefore well “ be afraid of the sword ; for wrath “ bringeth the punishments of the sword, that we “ may know there is a judgment.”

4. The providence of God may be viewed as either common or special. His *common* providence extends to all his creatures without exception ; that which is *special*, regards rational creatures, men and angels. While men in general are the objects of his special providence, it is more peculiarly exercised towards the Church, and in a way of eminence towards all who are her genuine members.

members. The Church is described as God's husbandry<sup>f</sup>; as his vineyard, which he waters every moment, which, lest any hurt it, he keeps night and day<sup>g</sup>. While all her members enjoy a special protection, this in a far higher sense is the privilege of believers. "The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him<sup>h</sup>."

But on these things I do not particularly enter. All that is further intended, is to illustrate the falsity of that idea, which is entertained by many who call themselves Christians, that divine providence is merely of a general nature. They perhaps go not so far as the Epicureans, who thought it unworthy of God to trouble himself with the affairs of men. But they make great approaches to this system; as they suppose that although God exercise some care about his creatures in general, he leaves them to the exertion of their own powers, in their actions, without any particular concurrence on his part; that many events depend merely on chance; and that many actions are so insignificant as not to merit his attention. In opposition to this doctrine, which in fact involves a total denial of providence, we mean to shew, from a variety of considerations,

*Secondly*, That providential operation is of a most particular nature, extending to all creatures, even the meanest, and to all their actions, however

<sup>f</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 9.

<sup>g</sup> Isa. xlvii. 3.

<sup>h</sup> 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

ever insignificant in themselves; and that all these are regulated for the accomplishment of the divine purpose, and in subserviency to the divine glory\*.

1. This appears from the *means* that God is pleased to employ. In the general tenor of his operation, he makes use of means. But these are often in themselves so *insignificant*, and so inadequate to the end, that we could not suppose it to be accomplished without an immediate operation on the part of God. The LORD had declared by his servant Elisha, that he would deliver Moab into the hands of the three confederate kings. But how strange were the means by which this prediction was fulfilled! At the desire of Elisha, ditches were made in the valley in which the army of the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom, were encamped. Against morning these were filled with water. When the Moabites arose early, the sun shone upon the water, and it appeared to them red as blood. They immediately concluded that the allied princes had turned their arms against each other. They said, "This is blood; the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another; now, therefore, Moab, to the spoil. And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them<sup>i</sup>." By such unlikely

\* In this illustration, I almost entirely abstain from a consideration of any of those works, which may properly be viewed as miraculous; lest it should be objected by the enemies of a particular providence, that from these we can form no just estimate of God's ordinary operation.

unlikely means did the confederated army obtain a complete victory, and the prophecy receive its accomplishment. God is pleased to employ such contemptible means, that his almighty operation may be more clearly discerned, and that the glory of the work may redound wholly to himself.

Often he employs means, which in their own nature and tendency are directly *contrary* to the end. God had sworn to Abraham that he would multiply his seed as the sand on the sea-shore. Yet he casts them into the furnace of Egypt, and subjects them to severe persecution. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied. In an extraordinary dream, he revealed to Joseph his future exaltation, and the obeisance he should receive from the sons of his father. But through what a devious course must he reach the promised greatness ! Only through the deepest abasement, can he attain the dignity awaiting him. He must be yet more hated of his brethren, ere he can be the object of their veneration. He must be sold as a slave, ere he can be honoured as a master. He must lose all that character and confidence that he had even as a slave, and be shut up in prison, under the imputation of one of the vilest of crimes, ere he can appear as the most distinguished personage in Egypt, next to Pharaoh. He must be more than once in danger of death, and be dead to his father ; before he can be the instrument of preserving him and the church in his house. Nor was it merely the will of God that this abasement  
should

should precede his exaltation. Although in its own nature diametrically opposite, it directly led to this event. Had he not been sold by his brethren, he could never have come into Potiphar's family. Had he not been falsely accused, he would not in all probability have been cast into prison. Had not this been the case, or had he served any one but the captain of the king's guard, although accused of the same crime, most probably he would not have been cast into the king's prison, but into some ordinary one. Thus he would have had no opportunity of seeing the imprisoned officers of the court, or of being at length known to Pharaoh as an interpreter of dreams.

Providence accomplishes its end even by the *wickedness* of man. This is one of the deep things of God, that he can employ the enemies of religion in his work, make use of their corruptions for the fulfilment of his purposes, direct and overrule their conduct, and yet act in a way perfectly consistent with his own infinite holiness; the immorality of the action being wholly their own. God overruled the despicable envy of Joseph's brethren for the salvation of the Church. Their intention was wicked and cruel, but his was holy and merciful. They indeed might be said to send Joseph into Egypt, as they sold him to the Ishmaelites when on their way thither. But in all this the pious Joseph saw an higher hand. "God sent me before you," says he to his brethren, "to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance."



“ance. So now, it was not *you* that sent me hither, but God.—As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good<sup>k</sup>.” Thus did he employ Pharaoh as an instrument for bringing his people to obey his call in leaving Egypt. They had been so long settled in that country, had become so attached to the carnal gratifications which it afforded, and were so contaminated with the idolatry of their neighbours, that, had not Pharaoh been a cruel tyrant, they in all probability, as Moses feared, would have positively refused to comply with the call of God. They had in a manner forgotten the promise made to their fathers. But he sends the rod of persecution, to drive them out of this land of idols.

II. The same thing is evident from the wonderful *concatenation* of circumstances, which is often observable in subserviency to some great event. The various circumstances which led to the exaltation of Joseph, and to the preservation of the Church, appear as so many links in one extensive chain. Some of them are very minute, and may seem in themselves of little importance. But they are so closely connected with the predicted end, that even in these we cannot but discern the hand of an all-wise agent.—I enlarge not, however, on this proof, having illustrated it fully in another place<sup>l</sup>.

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What

<sup>k</sup> Gen. xlv. 7, 8.; l. 20.

<sup>l</sup> Sermons on the Heart, Vol. i. p. 444, 445.

What is the book of Esther, but an history of the wonderful steps of divine Providence for the preservation of the Church, and for giving a signal overthrow to her enemies throughout the greatest part of the known world? What a trivial circumstance paves the way for the great event, and for all those which were previously necessary in order to its accomplishment! Ahasuerus, in the midst of a drunken revel, takes one whim; and Vashti his queen acts under the influence of another. He thought fit to send for her, "to shew the people and the princes her beauty;" but she refused to go, thinking perhaps that it was inconsistent with her dignity to appear in a company of men "merry with wine." She is accordingly disgraced; and Esther, a Jewish orphan, whose lineage was unknown at court, is preferred to all the virgins, collected from the various provinces of the Persian empire, and chosen in the room of Vashti.

The choice of Esther was not the only important link in this chain. There was another, not less necessary. This was the advancement of Haman, also a stranger, and an hereditary enemy of the whole Jewish nation. The king "set his seat above all the princes that were with him." The most prominent feature in the character of this Amalekite was pride. Had not his pride been hurt, the wisdom and power of God would not have been displayed in the deliverance of his people. The king had commanded that all his servants should bow and do reverence to Haman.

Mordecai,

Mordecai, the Jew, Esther's cousin, was the only one at the court of Persia who would not give Haman the commanded reverence ; most probably because it was of such a kind, as in his judgment belonged to God alone. The injured pride of Haman, like a cankered fore, swelled into the most cruel resentment. He thought it below his dignity to single out Mordecai as his victim. Nay, it seemed a revenge unworthy of his greatness, that this puny offender should be the only sufferer. He determined to glut his resentment, by making a sacrifice of the whole Jewish nation. The bloody, the irrevocable edict was accordingly passed, and transmitted by express to all the provinces, that the Jewish name might become extinct in one day.

Even after the edict was published, the adversary of the Jews could have no enjoyment of his greatness, as long as Mordecai sat in the king's gate. Haman thought, perhaps, that this dreadful edict might have a little tamed the spirit of Mordecai. But he still " moved not for him." He therefore changes his resolution ; and determines to anticipate his revenge, as to this obnoxious individual. He could not rest, therefore, till he got a gallows made for Mordecai, on which he was to be hanged next day. But observe, how God counterplots Satan ! Now, that Haman can take rest in his bed, the king can find none. " On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles ; and they were read before the

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" king.

“ king. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Tereſh, two of the king’s chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who thought to lay hands on the king. And the king ſaid, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then ſaid the king’s ſervants unto him, ‘There is no thing done for him <sup>m</sup>.’” On what a ſlender thread was the life of this faithful ſervant ſuſpended ! Had Ahaſuerus ſlept as uſual that night, there is every reaſon to believe that Mordecai would have perished next day. Although the king’s ſleep had “ fled away from him,” had he called for any entertainment but that of reading, for any other book but the records of his kingdom ; or had his ſervants read in any other place, but that which gave an account of the king’s preſervation from a conſpiracy ; in all probability Haman’s ſuit would have been granted, and his purpoſe fulfilled, before Eſther could have heard of his ſcheme. For at the very time that Ahaſuerus aſked the queſtion mentioned above, Haman had come into the outer court, “ to ſpeak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows “ he had prepared for him <sup>n</sup>.”

How narrow the hinge on which the ſalvation of the whole Church turned ! This was no other than the uncertain humour of a deſpot. So well was Eſther acquainted with this, and ſuch reaſon had ſhe to fear it, eſpecially as ſhe had “ not been “ called to come in unto the king for thirty days,”  
that

that when she resolved to present herself before him, she well knew that her life was at stake. Had Ahasuerus been in a fretful mood, when Esther appeared, or had he taken umbrage at her coming without being called ; her fate would have been worse than that of Vāshti. According to the nature of the Persian law, she must have perished ; and who would then have ventured to intercede for her people ?

It was the will of God, not only to defeat the designs of the wicked Haman, but to give the Church cause of triumph in the ruin of this implacable adversary. But his disgrace is deferred, till he had attained the greatest honour that could be conferred on a subject. Not only did Ahasuerus “ set his seat above all the princes,” but as Haman himself boasted, Queen Esther permitted no man to enter with the king to her banquet, but himself. This new honour shed a gleam of joy on his rankled heart <sup>n</sup>. But then, when he had reached the highest pinnacle of dependent greatness, he is hurled into the abyss of ruin : and it appears from the event, that the gallows, which he had prepared for Mordecai, was designed by God for himself.

Although, however, Mordecai was not only saved but exalted ; although Haman was brought to destruction ; there still seemed to be one insuperable obstacle to the preservation of the church. This was the irrevocable nature of the laws of the Medes and Persians. But even this was pro-



videntially ordered and overruled for the greater triumph and security of the people of God. For had the law been otherwise, their destruction would only have been prohibited. But as the king's edict could not, according to the constitution of the empire, be expressly recalled; another was published, empowering the Jews not only to stand on their defence, but to avenge themselves on all their enemies. It was now more than two months since the former edict had been published. They had, therefore, full time to know who were their enemies, and who anxiously waited for the day of their destruction. Thus also they were seconded and supported in the lawful means they used for their own preservation, by the rulers of the different provinces: and by the destruction of those "who sought their hurt," had a foundation laid for their safety against any attempt of a similar kind, when there might be no Mordecai to manage, and no Esther to intercede for them.

From the whole it is evident, that Mordecai spoke not in the way of mere conjecture, when he said to the queen; "Who knoweth, whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" There was nothing miraculous in all this concatenation of circumstances. But he, who can suppose that it could be wholly the effect of the operation of secondary causes, without any special operation of the First, is on the high way to atheism.

III. That

III. That this operation is of a most particular nature, frequently appears from the *season* of it. When the LORD is about to work deliverance, he often allows matters to come to extremity ; so that no rational hope can be formed from the ordinary operation of secondary causes. God had determined to deliver his ancient people from the power of the Philistines. But he would not do it, till they were reduced to a very abject state, and deprived of the ordinary means of deliverance. “ In the day of battle there was neither sword nor “ spear found in the hand of any of the people “ that were with Saul and Jonathan : but with “ Saul and with Jonathan his son was there “ found q.” The deliverance of the Jews from Babylon was an event of such importance, that for effecting it, God had purposed to overthrow the whole Chaldean empire. But it was delayed, till his people began to despair of relief, and expressed themselves in this manner ; “ Our “ bones are dried, and our hope is lost, we are cut “ off for our parts r.” God is pleased to work in this manner, that the operation may be more evidently his own, and that his perfections may be more signally glorified. In consequence of such deliverances, even the heathen are made to say ; “ The LORD hath done great things for them.” Can his own people refuse to add, “ The LORD “ hath done great things for us ?”

IV. The particularity of providential operation is often manifested by the *discovery* of secret sin.

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As

As the eyes of God “are upon the ways of men,” as “there is no darkness, nor shadow of death, “where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves;” even in the present life he often brings to light the hidden things of darkness. From the Sacred History it appears, that long before the giving of the law, it was a divine ordinance, that the widow of him who died childless should be married by his brother, or by the nearest of kin. Hence the crime of Tamar was considered as punishable with death. For she was viewed as virtually an adulteress, being reserved for the surviving brother of Er and Onan. But, in the wonderful disposal of Providence, her condemnation is overruled as the occasion of the discovery of Judah’s secret iniquity with her, and also of his being brought to a conviction and confession of his guilt in withholding from her his son Shelah. When she presented Judah’s bracelets, and signet, and staff, he acknowledged them, saying; “She hath been more righteous than I.” So remarkable are the ways in which sin is often brought to light, that even worldly men are laid under a necessity of acknowledging the hand of God. Sometimes the transgressor is most unaccountably infatuated. All the prudence displayed in his former conduct seems at once to forsake him; so that he acts as if he were determined to be his own accuser. At other times, the very schemes that he has devised with the greatest art for concealing his guilt, prove the occasion of a discovery.

very. This is especially the case with respect to murder. From the days of Cain till this hour, blood hath had a loud, a powerful cry.

In this manner did the sons of Jacob interpret the language of Providence, in the treatment they met with from their unknown brother. Till then they appear to have had no compunction for their crime, which had hitherto been buried in their own breasts. But a cluster of circumstances, in their present situation, seems to have flashed conviction on their obdurate minds. They were at this time in that very land into which they had sent their brother as a slave. The ruler of it under Pharaoh accused them of not being “true men;” and false had they been to him, and to their father. As they had formerly cast Joseph into a pit, they had themselves been all cast into prison. He refused to acquit them from the charge he had brought against them, and to deliver up the hostage he demanded, on any other condition than that of their bringing with them Benjamin, the darling of their father, and as they might imagine, the only surviving child of Rachel. Could they hear this requisition, without reflecting on their conduct towards her other son, whom they had hated, for no other reason than that which made them despair of being able to bring Benjamin,—because “his father loved him more than all his brethren<sup>u</sup>?” They had refused to listen to all the entreaties of Joseph; and their own, addressed to this stranger, are treated with

<sup>u</sup> Gen. xxxvii. 4.

with equal disregard. It is not surprising then, that their minds were all at once struck with the same conviction, and that they spoke with one voice. "They said one to another, We are verily  
 " guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw  
 " the anguish of his soul, when he besought us ;  
 " and we would not hear : therefore is this di-  
 " stress come upon us. And Reuben answered  
 " them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do  
 " not sin against the child ; and ye would not  
 " hear : therefore behold also, *his blood is requi-*  
*" red v."*

v. Divine providence is often singularly displayed in the striking *similarity* that may be observed between *sin* and *punishment*. A great variety of examples might be given from Scripture. But I shall mention only two or three ; having already made some observations on this head, when treating of the Justice of God.

The Egyptians were " guilty of blood," in executing the iniquitous decree of Pharaoh, who commanded that all the male children of the Israelites should be drowned in the river Nile : and in the punishment of this guilt, the plagues of Egypt had their commencement. God turned into blood the waters of this river, which alone supplied the Egyptians with drink<sup>w</sup>. He " gave  
 " them blood to drink, because they were wor-  
 " thy ;" and this judgment was a striking figure of that which should be inflicted, according to the  
 same

v Gen. xlii. 21, 22.

w Exod. vii. 20.



same plan of retribution, on that antichristian body, which “spiritually is called Egypt,” which by her corruption has converted the precious waters of the sanctuary into blood, and has also been made “drunken with the blood of the saints.” David had greatly sinned in the matter of Uriah. The blood of this just man called for vengeance. God, in his sovereign pleasure, dispensed with his own law, in as far as David was personally concerned. He intimated to him, that he should not die. But he was pleased to give a perpetual memorial of his displeasure in declaring that, because he had killed Uriah with the sword of the children of Ammon, the sword should never depart from his house. David had previously raised up evil against Uriah in his own house, by seducing his wife; thus robbing the poor man of his “one little ewe lamb.” For this reason God said to David, “Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house.” And in what manner was this threatening to be fulfilled? The wives and concubines of David were to be defiled by his own son<sup>2</sup>. What a strict and awful retribution have we here! blood punished by blood, and one sin by another of the same kind, although far more aggravated, adultery by incest! Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, coveted the property of Naaman the leper, and employed such means for obtaining it, as involved himself in the guilt of falsehood, and subjected his master to the imputation of having acted dishonourably.

x Rev. xi. 8.

y Chap. viii. 8.; xvii. 6.

z 2 Sam. xii. 9.—11.

honourably. But in the righteous justice of God, he is made to possess a part of the former property of Naaman, that he coveted not. He went out from the presence of his master, a leper white as snow<sup>a</sup>. As God required the blood of righteous Naboth of the house of Ahab, there was one peculiar aggravation of the crime, which must have been recalled to the recollection of others by a circumstance attending the punishment. When Ahab determined the destruction of Naboth, at the instigation of his wicked wife, he used religion as a pretence. He proclaimed a fast, and accused the good man of blasphemy. Observe the wonderful retribution. By a similar pretence, and with no more sincerity, Jehu extended the vengeance to the whole posterity of Ahab. When about to execute it, he said to Jonadab, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD<sup>b</sup>."

VI. The particular operation of Providence is often discernible in the choice of the *instruments* employed for punishing iniquity. It was the will of God to punish the cruelty of Haman, the adversary of the Jews; but he would first humble his pride, which had set his cruelty a-working. What instrument could be so completely adapted for this end, as that Mordecai whom he hated more than any human being? This upright Jew had used no means which could tend to the destruction of his adversary. He was merely a passive instrument; and therefore the hand of God

was

<sup>a</sup> 2 Kings v. 27.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Kings xxi. 6.—13.; 2 Kings x. 16.

was more eminently seen in the whole management of this matter. What could give such a wound to the pride of Haman, who knew the great partiality of Ahasuerus for himself, as to learn that Mordecai, that contemptible Jew, whom he had condemned to the gallows, was “the man whom the king delighted to honour?” The command of Ahasuerus, directed to Haman, must have inflicted a still deeper wound. When Haman was asked by his master what should be done to the man whom the king delighted to honour; as he had not the least hesitation that he was himself the favoured person, he proposed that very plan that would be most gratifying to his own pride. “Let the royal apparel,” said he, “be brought, which the king useth to wear, and “the horse that the king rideth upon, and the “crown-royal which is set upon his head. And “let this apparel and horse be delivered to the “hand of one of the king’s most noble princes, “that he may array the man withal whom the “king delighteth to honour, and bring him on “horseback through the street of the city, and “proclaim before him, Thus shall be done to the “man whom the king delighteth to honour.” All this was Haman commanded to do to Mordecai. The conclusion that his wife men and his wife formed from this event, was soon verified in the experience of Haman. They said to him, “If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before “whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not pre-  
“vail

“vail against him, but shalt surely fall before  
“him <sup>c</sup>.”

It is one strange character of the operation of God, that he often employs instruments, whom he finds it necessary to punish for the very work they have done. We have seen, that the use he makes of them is perfectly consistent with his own infinite holiness. But he punishes them, because of the wicked motives by which they have been actuated in doing his work. We have formerly referred to the severe punishment of Sennacherib. Concerning Nebuchadnezzar, a celebrated writer makes the following observations: “We see in the person of this impious, and at  
“the same time victorious king, what are those  
“men called conquerors. They are for the most  
“part but instruments of the divine vengeance.  
“God exercises his justice by them, and then  
“exercises it upon them.”—Judea “totally falls,  
“is totally destroyed by the divine justice, where-  
“of Nebuchadnezzar is the minister. He too  
“shall fall in his turn; and God, who employs  
“the hand of that prince to chastise his children,  
“and pull down his enemies, reserves him for his  
“own almighty hand <sup>d</sup>.”

VII. The *circumstances* of punishment often demand our attention, as affording a striking proof of a particular operation. The *time* is sometimes very remarkable. God had determined to abase Nebuchadnezzar, because of his pride and vain glory.

<sup>c</sup> Esther vi. 7.—13.

<sup>d</sup> Doctuet's Universal History, Vol. i. p. 235, &c.

glory. The opportunity which Providence embraced was such as signally to display divine operation; and, at the same time, to proclaim the reason of the judgment. While the king walked in the palace of Babylon, he “spake and said, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built “for the house of the kingdom, by the might of “my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” Every word that he utters, is fraught with arrogance and self-importance. It was folly in him to look, with such a temper of mind, on a mass of stone and lime, that might soon be converted into a heap of ruins. Not satisfied, however, with viewing the work with admiration, his thoughts break out into language. Nor does he merely say, “Is not this Babylon?” but it must be “great “Babylon.” And why great? Because Nebuchadnezzar had built it. “Is not this *great* Babylon, that *I* have built?” as if he could impart his own fancied greatness to the work of his masons and carpenters; or because he wished that this greatness should be reflected in the extent and splendour of his imperial city. But the end must not be forgotten;—“built,—for the house “of the kingdom,” for a royal palace, for the metropolis of a great empire. By what power was all this effected? Does he acknowledge the true God? Does he mention even his own Bel or Nebo? No. This proud monarch feels as if, after such a wonderful creation, he were great enough to be a god to himself:—“Great Babylon, that I have built,—by my power.” This had



had been too feeble a mode of expression, in describing so astonishing a work. There must be a reduplication of the idea, to give a more enlarged view of his possession of this attribute. He talks in a superlative style, as if entitled to use godlike language ;—" by the might of my power." And as if the end formerly mentioned,—“ for the “ house of the kingdom,” had been of itself unworthy of the dignity of the agent, or unequal to the importance of the work, he subjoins ;—" and for the honour of my majesty." Here he discovers his last, his highest end. As he speaks without any regard to God, he declares that his building such an elegant metropolis was not for the benefit or comfort of his fellow-men ; or merely, or even principally, for the honour of the kingdom of Babylon. He views the whole, only as it related to himself. The language had been arrogant enough, had he only said ;—" by my power, “ for my honour." But the end must be notified by the same pompous pleonasm as the means. All this is “ for the honour of *my* majesty."

Let us mark the immediate consequence. “ *While* the word was in the king’s mouth, there “ fell a voice from heaven, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, Thy kingdom is “ departed from thee. And they shall drive thee “ from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the “ beasts of the field .” He had in effect “ set his “ mouth against the heavens :” and “ there fell a “ voice” from that exalted throne which he had  
outraged

outraged by his arrogance. What a fatal blow to his impious egotism ! “ *To thee* it is spoken.” In the awful sentence, he is acknowledged as a king : but only to remind him, that there is one infinitely above him, who indeed “ beholdeth all “ high things, and is a king over all the children “ of pride ;” and to prepare him for receiving the mortifying intelligence, that his “ kingdom is “ departed.” He is not only stript of his royal power, and thrust out from his palace ; but the whole extent of Babylon cannot afford him a shelter. Driven from “ the house of his king- “ dom,” he must have his “ dwelling with the “ beasts of the field.” He who had “ come up “ like a lion from the swelling of Jordan unto the “ habitation of the strong<sup>b</sup>,” is not permitted, in his abasement, even to retain the character of this monarch of the forest. So low is “ the honour “ of his majesty” brought, that he is “ made to “ eat grafs as oxen.” As this sentence “ fell “ from heaven,” at the very time that “ the word “ was in the king’s mouth,” how sudden was its execution ! “ The same hour was the thing ful- “ filled upon Nebuchadnezzar.”

Similar, as to time, was the punishment of his grandson Belshazzar. In the madness of a great feast, he would make an experiment more daring than any he had ever made in his more sober moments. At his command, “ they brought the “ golden vessels that were taken out of the tem- “ ple of the house of God, which was at Jerusa-

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“ lem :

<sup>b</sup> Jer. li. 44.

“lem : and the king, and his princes, his wives  
 “and his concubines, drank in them.” As if  
 the impiety of profaning the vessels consecrated  
 to the true God had been too little, they go as  
 far as possible to make him the minister of their  
 abominable idolatry. They drank wine, and  
 “they praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of  
 “brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.” But the  
 judgment of this ungodly prince lingered not.  
 “*In the same hour* came forth fingers of a man’s  
 “hand, and wrote over against the candlestick,”  
 in the most conspicuous place of the royal apart-  
 ment. And what was the writing? Although  
 the will of God was communicated in a different  
 manner, it was materially the same with that  
 expressed by the voice from heaven, which was  
 directed to his grandfather. The writing was  
 this; “God hath numbered thy kingdom, and  
 “finished it c.”

Many similar instances of the *sudden* execution  
 of sentence against evil works are recorded in  
 Scripture. The Israelites demanded flesh, to sa-  
 tisfy their lust. God gave it, but in anger : and  
 to shew in the most unequivocal manner the cause  
 of his displeasure, “while the flesh was yet be-  
 “tween their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath  
 “of the LORD was kindled against the people;  
 “and he smote them with a very great plague d.”  
 Punishment overtook both Ananias and his wife  
 Sapphira, as soon as they had sinned e. Of the  
 same kind was the judgment of King Herod. No  
 sooner

c Dan. v. 2.—4, 26.

d Numb. xi. 33.

e Acts v. 1.—10.

teoner was his heart fly-blown with pride, than he became a prey to worms. He cordially accepted the base adulation of the people, when they impiously said, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And *immediately* the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost <sup>f</sup>."

The *place* of punishment is often very remarkable. When Ahab caused the just Naboth to be murdered, God declared, that where dogs had licked Naboth's blood, dogs should also lick the blood of Ahab; and that they should eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, that is, the very field that had belonged to Naboth <sup>g</sup>. How strictly was this fulfilled! Ahab having been mortally wounded in battle, while in his chariot; when his body was brought to Samaria, "one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood <sup>h</sup>." About twenty-four years afterwards, when Jehu assumed the royal authority, he commanded that Jezebel should be thrown down from a window of the palace. After he had spent some time in refreshing himself, thinking perhaps that he had treated her with too much indignity, he commanded that she should be buried, as being a king's daughter. But when they went to bury her, "they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands." It is evident, from the history, that in this instance Jehu had no design to co-operate

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<sup>f</sup> Acts xii. 22, 23.<sup>g</sup> 1 Kings xxi. 19: 23.<sup>h</sup> 1 Kings xxii. 38.

rate in the confirmation of prophecy. For till he received this information, he had no recollection of the sentence pronounced against her. Then indeed it recurred on his mind. "They came again, and told him : and he said, This is the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, *In the portion of Jezreel* shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel : and the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field, *in the portion of Jezreel*, so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel<sup>i</sup>." As little was it from any preconcerted design on the part of Jehu, that the descendants of Ahab were killed in the very place where the blood of Naboth had been wickedly shed. "Joram king of Israel, and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out against Jehu, and *met* him in the *portion* of *Naboth* the Jezreelite<sup>k</sup>." It is remarkable indeed, that the vengeance threatened was brought on the house of Ahab, at the very time that the king of Judah was on a visit to Jeroboam ; that he might partake of the punishment, as being a descendant of the wicked Ahab. Joram, having been wounded in battle against the Syrians at Ramah, it was providentially ordered that he should go to Jezreel, rather than to Samaria, to be healed of his wounds. Thither, his cousin Ahaziah had come to see him, because he was wounded<sup>l</sup>. There is no evidence that Jehu fixed on this time, from a wish to include the king of Judah in the punishment

<sup>i</sup> 2 Kings ix. 30.—36.

<sup>k</sup> 2 Kings ix. 21.

<sup>l</sup> 2 Kings viii. 29.



ment of the house of Ahab. It does not even appear, that Jehu knew of Ahaziah's being then at Jezreel. But all was the result of the immutable purpose of God, and accomplished by a wonderful operation of his Providence. "The destruction of Ahaziah *was of God*, by coming to Joram: for, when he was come, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to cut off the *house of Ahab* <sup>m</sup>." In like manner, it was the will of God, that the sons of his brethren, to the number of forty-two, should come from Jerusalem to Samaria, at this very time, on a visit to the children of Ahab, who resided there, that they might be included in the common fate of that devoted family <sup>n</sup>.

VIII. I shall only add, that the truth of what we have asserted appears from those events which are of a *contingent* nature. Events may be called fortuitous or contingent with respect to men, as not being influenced by human foresight, or depending on such an operation of secondary causes that the result can be matter of rational expectation. But none of these can be viewed as contingent with respect to God. As they are all certainly foreknown to him, they are all disposed and directed by his Providence. Although the issue of the lot, if fairly managed, depends not on human skill, and lies beyond the reach of human foresight; yet we have various instances of its

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being

m 2 Chron. xxii. 7.

n 2 Kings x. 11.—14.; 2 Chron. xxi. 17.

being so regulated by God, as clearly to declare his overruling providence, and to proclaim his will : as in the case of Achan <sup>o</sup>, of Saul <sup>p</sup>, of Jonathan <sup>q</sup>, and of Jonah <sup>r</sup>. The unnatural sons of Jacob had formed no fixed plan as to the manner in which they were to dispose of their brother Joseph. His being sold, rather than suffered to perish in a pit, was a mere contingency to them. Not less so was the appearance of the Ishmaelites at this time. Of the same nature was the circumstance of his becoming the slave of Potiphar. But although these things were contingent to them, they were necessary according to the eternal purpose ; and all managed, as we have already seen, by a particular providence. Ahab received his death entirely in a fortuitous way, as far as man was concerned. But, as was foretold by Micahiah, it was the decree of the Most High that he should fall that day. He used every precaution for the preservation of his life. He disguised himself, that he might be unknown in battle ; while he ungenerously asked of Jehoshaphat to appear in his royal apparel, and thus expose himself to the danger he wished to avoid. He also entered the field in complete armour. The thirty two Syrian captains, at the command of their sovereign, employed the utmost diligence to discover Ahab ; but, as would appear, in vain. “ A certain man,” however, “ drew a bow at a venture, and smote “ the king of Israel between the joints of the har-  
“ ness.”

<sup>o</sup> Josh. vii. 16.—18.

<sup>p</sup> 1 Sam. x. 21.

<sup>q</sup> 1 Sam. xiv. 42.

<sup>r</sup> Jonah i. 7.

“nefs.” There is no evidence that this was one of the captains, appointed to search for Ahab. This archer shot without any particular aim. For he “drew a bow in his simplicity,” as the words literally signify, having no apprehension that he would hit the king of Israel. But the arrow was directed by the divine hand, to the very spot in Ahab’s armour by which an arrow might enter, and where he might receive a mortal wound.

The doctrine of a particular providence is fraught with consolation. What reason have we to rejoice, that nothing in our lot can be the effect of mere chance; that every thing which befalls us “cometh from the LORD, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working;” and that even those events which may be accidental to us, are all the effect of infinite wisdom, and produced by the unerring operation of almighty power!

Let us still regard and acknowledge the operation of his hand. Do we enjoy prosperity? Let us remember, that it is God alone who maketh rich or great. Are we visited with adversity? We may derive comfort from this consideration, that “affliction riseth not out of the ground, and that trouble springeth not from the dust.” Are we indebted to any of our fellow men as benefactors? Let us not return ingratitude for their kindness. But, least of all, let us forget the God of our mercy. Well may we imitate the conduct

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of Ezra, who, while he acknowledged the kindness of Artaxerxes, especially remarked the divine hand; saying, "Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, who hath put such a thing as "this in the king's heart." Do we suffer unjustly from others? Although we have given them no provocation, we may well say, "Is there "not a cause?" Have we not, times and ways without number, provoked that just and holy God, who has an indisputable right to employ whom he will as the instruments of his displeasure? Let us imitate the conduct of David, who, when Shimei the Benjamite reviled and cursed him without a just reason, said to those who were eager to take vengeance on this worthless man, "Let him "alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath "bidden him."

Justly mayest thou, O Christian, take comfort from this precious doctrine. That God, in whom "all live, and are moved, and have their being," who "giveth life, and breath, and all things," is thy God. Thou art not only, in common with others, under the direction of a particular providence, in all thy ways: but to thee it is wholly a providence of love. All the ways of the LORD thy God are truth and mercy. They are all truth, as exactly corresponding with his gracious promise; and all mercy, as directly tending to its full accomplishment. He does not merely compass thy path, and thy lying down; but he still surrounds thee with his favour, as with a shield.

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Thy severest adversities “work together for good.” The ways of thy God may now seem covered with darknefs. But in a little thou shalt see, that they have been all “prepared as the morning.” Wait, therefore, on the Lord thy God. Commit thy way to him, and he will bring it to pass. “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked : but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.”

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## SECTION X.

*The Natural Depravity of Man.—Example insufficient to account for the Symptoms or Universality of Human Corruption.—This proved to be Natural, from its Early Appearance ;—from the History of Seth ;—from the Names given to the Antediluvian Patriarchs ;—from the Death of Children ;—from the Circumstances which allude to the Manner in which Sin is transmitted.*

WE have already taken a cursory view of human depravity ; of its rapid progress and almost universal dominion, of its influence on the heart, and of its fatal effects. Let us now trace this to its origin ; and it will appear that man is indeed “a transgressor from the womb.” From the nature of this work, it would be improper to introduce



duce those proofs that are merely of a doctrinal kind : and I shall not even call the attention of the reader to all the historical evidence which the Scripture affords. The doctrine of our original corruption might be proved, from the nature of that federal transaction into which God entered with man in a state of innocence ; from the covenant being made with Adam before the formation of Eve, although it included her as well as her husband, and on the same principle, the posterity of both ; from the curse pronounced on the ground, *for the sake of man*, which undoubtedly affects the descendants of Adam, no less than it did himself ; from the circumstance of his calling his wife Eve, that is, “ the mother of all living,” not immediately after God had blessed them, saying, “ Be fruitful and multiply,” nor while they continued in a state of integrity, but after the fall. This, as it clearly shews his persuasion that all those of her posterity who should in a spiritual sense deserve the name of *living*, should be made alive by virtue of that Seed, who, according to the promise, was to spring from her ; at the same time testifies his conviction that they should all by nature be under the sentence of spiritual and eternal *death*. Without entering into a particular consideration of these, and of several other proofs of the same kind, I shall confine myself to a few of a different description.

1. It is plain from Scripture-history, that the corruption of man proceeds not merely, or chiefly, from *example*. Imitation is indeed a powerful

ful principle in our nature ; but it cannot produce all the effects which have been ascribed to it. If there be no corrupt bias in the heart of man, the principle of imitation must, where circumstances are equal, have equal effects, although of an opposite kind. It must operate as powerfully in following a good, as an evil, example. But how far this is from being the case, let the experience of mankind declare.

The crime of Cain was not only heinous in itself, but highly aggravated. It was not merely murder, one of the most horrid crimes that can be perpetrated by man, but fratricide ; and fratricide committed under the form of persecution for righteousness' sake. Abel had given no provocation to his brother. He had trampled on no law human or divine. He had not directed a single word of reproach against Cain. But " he slew him, because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." He committed this crime in the very face of God, after being favoured with an immediate revelation, warning him of his duty, and encouraging him by a promise of acceptance, as well as of dominion over his brother <sup>w</sup>.

The wickedness of Cain could not proceed from imitation : for he was the first murderer. It could not be the effect of a gradual progress in guilt, in consequence of a long course of personal iniquity, or the influence of example in a long succession of ages. Although the first man born of

of woman, he was as wicked as any who have since existed. He went as far as he possibly could, according to the nature of his sin; and we can scarcely form the idea of one more horrid. His guilt was further aggravated by subsequent arrogance, obduracy, and impiety.

New modes of sinning may be devised, in consequence of the exercise of man's fertile invention in the service of Satan. But these are only varied operations of the same corrupt principle. Or sin may become more general, from the influence of example and persuasion. The *ways* of man may become more flagitious; but the principle in the *heart* is continually evil <sup>x</sup>.

It may be said perhaps, that the example of Abel, although in the same family, affords a proof that the corruption of Cain was not hereditary. But let it be observed, that we find nothing in the history of Cain, which distinguishes him as naturally a worse man than his brother. It was only "in process of time," when he presented an offering to the LORD, that the wickedness of his heart appeared. We are informed indeed that Abel was righteous, while the character of Cain was quite the reverse. But did the righteousness of Abel originate from a better nature, or from the exercise of his own powers? No; "by faith he offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous <sup>y</sup>." Now, as "faith is not of ourselves, but is the gift of God;" this clearly  
shews

shews that righteousness was not more natural to Abel than to his brother, but given him from above.

Such is the *universality* of this corruption, that we must necessarily conclude that it is born with us. Were not man naturally corrupt, it is inconceivable that in the course of only nine generations from Adam, corruption should be so universal, that only one man should be found righteous in the whole world ; and so great, as to exhaust the long-suffering of the God of mercy ; especially when we consider the longevity of the patriarchs ; the consequent opportunity afforded to their posterity of being instructed with respect to the creation, the fall, and the revelation of grace ; and the appearance of at least one illustrious prophet during this period. There might be some ground to plead the influence of example, did only the children of the wicked follow their ways. But we learn from Scripture, what is confirmed by observation in every age, that even the children of the most pious parents, who have been strictly educated in the ways of God, and as far as possible preserved from the company of the wicked, discover the same corrupt inclinations with others. I shall not mention the ungodly and undutiful Ham, lest it should be said that he was tainted by the wickedness of the antediluvian world. Did not Abraham receive this signal testimony from God himself ? “ I know him, that “ he will command his children and his house-  
“ hold after him ; and they shall keep,” or “ that  
“ they

“they may keep the way of the LORD<sup>z</sup>.” Was not Abraham separated from the world around him, separated from his own kindred? Yet there was an Ishmael in his family, a scoffer, a persecutor<sup>a</sup>. Was not Isaac the father of that “profane person Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright<sup>b</sup>!” So wicked were some of the sons of Jacob, that they “troubled him, to make him to stink among the inhabitants of the land<sup>c</sup>.” Two of them were guilty of incest<sup>d</sup>; two of them were perfidious murderers; and they almost all conspired against Joseph, and sold him as a slave.

II. It is evident that this depravity is natural to man, because it is ascribed to him, and actually appears in his conduct, from his *earliest years*. Here we might appeal to universal experience. Where is the parent, who, unless wonderfully blinded by self-love or prejudice, has not remarked in his children the mournful dawns of peevishness, wilfulness, disobedience, envy and resentment, almost from the womb? Who has not seen, that falsehood is their natural language, as soon as they begin to speak? But we appeal to the observation of that Witness who cannot err. It is his testimony, that “the imagination of man’s heart is evil *from his youth*,” or “in fancy<sup>e</sup>.” It is not said that man’s ways are evil, but the assertion respects his heart. Nor is it simply declared that his heart is evil; but this depravity

z Gen. xviii. 19.

a Gen. xxi. 9.; Gal. iv. 29.

b Heb. xii. 16.

c Gen. xxxiv. 30.

d Gen. xxxv. 22.; xxxviii. 18.

e Gen. viii. 21.



depravity is ascribed to the imagination of his heart; that is, to the very first figment of thought there. For in us, that is, "in our flesh," in our nature as children of Adam, "dwelleth no good thing;" and we are not "sufficient of ourselves" "to think any thing as of ourselves<sup>f</sup>." This corruption is not confined to years of maturity. Man is thus depraved from his very infancy. For the original word, as it is sometimes rendered childhood<sup>g</sup>, properly denotes the whole age of man from his conception, till he arrive at the state of manhood. It is a derivative from the word which is used to signify a mere infant, and even an embryo in the womb<sup>h</sup>.

Do we read of some, who in their early years have manifested a different propensity? We are at the same time assured that this was entirely the effect of divine grace. Thus John the Baptist was "filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb<sup>i</sup>."

III. Original depravity is evidently ascribed to that *Patriarch*, who was to be the progenitor of the Messiah, as well as of the Church. It has been often observed, that the language employed by the Spirit of God, concerning the generation of Seth, deserves particular attention. "Adam"—begat a son in his own likeness, after his "image; and called his name Seth." He must be wilfully blind, who, in this phraseology, observes not an obvious reference to the language used

<sup>f</sup> Rom. vii. 18.; 2 Cor. iii. 5.

<sup>h</sup> Exod. ii. 6.; Judg. xiii. 7.

<sup>g</sup> 1 Sam. xii. 2.

<sup>i</sup> Luke i. 15.

used with respect to the creation of Adam, and at the same time a striking antithesis. "God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness<sup>k</sup>." But lest the reader should overlook the contrast, because of the passage referred to being at some little distance in the history, the same language is repeated immediately before this declaration with respect to Seth: "In the "day that God created man, *in the likeness of God* "made he him.—And Adam lived an hundred "and thirty years, and begat a son in *his own* "likeness, after *his* image<sup>l</sup>." A very important difference is undoubtedly marked between the likeness of God and that of Adam. The likeness of Adam was that of a fallen mortal creature. Adam was now a believer, but he was a sinful man. The image of God, which he had lost by the fall, was indeed partially restored. But this was not properly *his* image: and as it was restored only by grace, it could not be communicated according to the course of nature. Adam could beget no son in his likeness, even as partially renewed. For moral rectitude can only be the effect of a new creation: and we are thus created, not in the first, but in the second Adam<sup>m</sup>. Although it had been possible, that our first parent could have communicated his image as a renewed man, still there would have been a communication of his remaining corruption; and Seth would have inherited original sin.

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k Gen. i. 26.

l Gen. v. 1. 3.

m Eph. ii. 10; Col. iii. 10.

The language of the Spirit of God, in this passage, forms so remarkable an antithesis to that employed concerning the creation of Adam, that the mind instantaneously and irresistibly recurs to it : and how repugnant soever to the pride of the heart, feels a secret conviction that this means something very different from being “ created in God’s image, after his likeness.”

This account is not given with respect to Cain, although there can be no doubt that it is equally applicable to him. But some might have indulged the vain imagination, that, when Cain received existence, sin retained more of its virulence in our first parents, than afterwards. Or, it might have been supposed, that this was peculiar to Cain, of whom it is said that he “ was of that wicked one ;” and that although similar depravity had been communicated to his posterity, this had perished with them in the universal deluge. Nor is this said of Abel, who, as far as appears, left no issue. But this account is reserved for the history of that other seed, whom God appointed instead of righteous Abel. As, after the deluge, the earth was to be peopled solely by the descendants of Seth ; as the seed of the Church, nay, that seed, in which all the families of the earth should be blessed, was to spring from him ; we are taught, by the Spirit of inspiration, what judgment we ought to form with respect to the natural state of mankind in general, and even of those who are the heirs of glory.

iv. The very *names* of some of the patriarchs convey this important lesson. Among the Hebrews and other eastern nations, the names imposed on persons, either at their birth or afterwards, were always significant. They were monuments, of the most simple and familiar kind. They either denoted something singular in regard to their birth, or respected some blessing from God. Thus they were a sort of compendious history. For we must suppose, that parents were at pains to explain them to their children ; and they could not be pronounced, without the recollection of the reason of their being imposed <sup>n</sup>.

But most of the names given by the antediluvian patriarchs are confined to one affecting subject. They express the guilt and misery of our nature ; as if these good men had still looked back to the entrance of sin, and kept in their eye its deserved punishment. The name of *Abel*, as it signifies *vanity*, or “ a vapour that soon vanisheth away,” emphatically denoted, not merely the brevity of his life, but that of the life of man in general, who “ at his best state is altogether “ vanity.” Seth, the substitute for Abel, gave a name to his son, which exhibits man in the same melancholy point of view. “ He called his name “ *Enos*.” This signifies *sorrowful, grievously sick, miserable*. Nor was this name confined to him. Like that of *Abel*, it is extended to all men ; who are often called *Enos*, or *sons of Enos*, because

<sup>n</sup> Fleury, Mœurs des Israélites, Chap. i.

cause of their spiritual sickness, their sorrow and misery. Hence the Psalmist prays, with respect to the enemies and persecutors of the Church ; “ Put them in fear, O LORD, that the nations may “ know themselves to be *Enos*, miserable men.” Enos seems to have recollected the meaning of his own name, when he gave one to his son *Cainan* ; for this may be rendered *mourning* or *lamentation*. The grandson of Cainan was called *Jared* ; which may be translated *descending*, and has been understood as referring to the *descent* of the sons of God from that state of separation from the posterity of Cain, in which they had hitherto continued <sup>p</sup>. In different places of Scripture, the same word denotes the effects of sin ;—as in Jer. xlviii. 18. “ *Come down* from thy glory :” Lam. i. 9. “ She remembereth not her last end ; “ therefore she *came down* wonderfully.” The name *Methuselah* has been rendered by some, “ He dies, “ and it is sent ;” by others, “ He dies, and the “ dart cometh.” According to either translation, the name is viewed as having a prophetic reference to the deluge, which was *sent* that very year in which this good man *died*. Enoch, we know, was a prophet ; and it would appear that in giving a name to his son, he foretold the flood nearly a thousand years before it came. Methuselah called his son *Lamech*, that is, *poor, made low*, or *one who is struck*.

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o Psal. ix. 20. See Answ. on Gen. iv. 26.

p Heidegger. Hist. Sac. Vol. i. Ex. vi. f. 31.



v. The corruption of our nature appears from the dominion which *death* hath exercised over *children*. The apostle Paul, in proving the existence of a law previous to that given from Mount Sinai, and the condemnation of men by this law, observes, “ that death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression<sup>q</sup> ;” that is, over children, who had never sinned in their own persons. That death indeed reigned over these, or exercised its full power on them, is evident from the Scripture-history. Vast multitudes of children must have perished in the deluge. The destruction of the cities of the plain extended to persons of every age. Many thousands, who had never actually sinned, must have suffered in the plague of the first-born. The command of God, with respect to the extermination of the Amalekites, and other devoted nations, included children as well as adults. But, to use the language of Abraham, when interceding for Sodom and Gomorrah, as God “ will not destroy the “ righteous with the wicked,” we may be assured that the children, over whom death was permitted to reign, were not viewed by him as *righteous*. “ Who ever perished, being innocent ?” They “ had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s “ transgression.” They could be viewed as guilty, therefore, only as having sinned in that common parent, who, as a public representative, “ is “ the figure of him that is to come<sup>r</sup>.”

To

q Rom. v. 14.

r Rom. v. 12. 14. comp.

To pretend that the death of infants is to be considered as a mercy rather than a judgment, as taking them away from the evils of this life ; is to beg the question in a very ridiculous manner, by supposing that they indiscriminately make a change to the better, or, in other words, that they must of necessity be free from future punishment, as being free from sin. This assertion also flatly denies the veracity of God in the threatening and sentence of the law : for it represents that as a blessing, which he denounces as a curse. It is equally repugnant to all the feelings of our nature. For we still view death as in itself, not a benefit, but a calamity. However great the sufferings of life, it is a very rare case, if men do not recoil from death with horror : and for reconciling the mind to it, all the consolations of religion are requisite.

vi. The Scripture-history includes a variety of circumstances which evidently allude to the *manner* in which sin is transmitted. The first dictate of shame, as felt by the parents of our race, in consequence of the entrance of sin, was to conceal those parts which are the instruments of generation. All the members of the body are employed as the instruments of unrighteousness ; but shame is especially excited by the nakedness of these ; as if God would set a special mark of dishonour on them, to remind us that in this way sin, the parent of shame, is transmitted from one generation to another ; and that the human race

is continued, and sin communicated, by the very same means.

The ordinance of circumcision had a similar reference. Being a painful rite, it intimated that sin merits suffering, and that man is subjected to this by the sentence of his Judge. Was this rite performed in the way of excision? It signified that the whole man deserves to be cut off from the fellowship of God. From the language frequently used in Scripture, it is evident that this ceremony denoted that the heart is depraved and polluted by sin. Therefore we read of the uncircumcision of the heart, and of its being necessary that this should be circumcised by divine grace<sup>s</sup>. As it was a seal of the covenant of grace, and of “the righteousness which is by faith;” it respected man’s condemnation by the first covenant, and proclaimed his need of justification and salvation by another. It was to be performed on the eighth day, that is, as soon as the child could be supposed able to bear it without danger, or be cleansed; to declare that man is corrupted, that he is subjected to suffering, that his heart is depraved, and that he needs to be regenerated and justified, even from the womb.

The hereditary curse to which woman is subjected, is a striking indication of the manner in which sin is transmitted. “Unto the woman God said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception,” that is, “thy sorrow in conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.”

<sup>s</sup> Lev. xvi. 41.; Jer. ix. 26.; Deut. x. 16.; xxx. 6.

“children.” Had this sentence been confined to Eve herself, it might have been viewed as merely the punishment of her personal guilt. But it is entailed on her daughters. It subsists in its full force, although it is nearly six thousand years since it was pronounced. Individuals, indeed, in almost every region, from some peculiarity of frame, and even the females in general belonging to some nations, feel the effect of the latter part of this sentence in a very inferior degree, having little pain in child-bearing. But this no more forms an objection to the general law, than does the great fertility of some parts of the earth to the curse pronounced on it for the sin of man. Sorrow in *conception* and *child-bearing* is the common lot of women in every age: and for what end, but to remind mankind, in their successive generations, of the manner in which sin entered into the world; to teach them also that they were “*conceived* in sin,” and that it is impossible that “he who is *born* of a woman should be righteous?” This hereditary sorrow, which is the native fruit of sin, proclaims to the woman, every time she conceives or bears a child, that she “travaileth with iniquity, hath conceived mischief, and brings forth falsehood.”

It also deserves notice, that sorrow in these respects is confined to our nature. It is unknown to all other animals, in any similar degree, except in peculiar cases, or as proceeding from some

accidental cause : and such occasional diversities cannot enter into the description of the species in general.

I may add, that the atonement enjoined under the law for every woman “ who had conceived “ feed, and born a child,” conveys the same instruction. She was not only to continue in a state of purification forty days, for a male-child, and eighty for a female ; but it was necessary that, when the time appointed was elapsed, she should “ bring an offering, and that the priest should “ make an atonement for her <sup>u</sup>.”

vii. The *miraculous conception* of our Saviour affords a strong argument in support of the doctrine under consideration. It was promised that he should be the *seed* of the *woman*<sup>v</sup>. For had he descended from Adam in the way of ordinary generation, he must also have sinned and died in him ; and thus he could never have bruised the head of the serpent. The Messiah, indeed, could not himself be subjected to death by means of the first Adam ; and yet by dying procure life, as the second. As this great promise was made immediately after the entrance of sin, and just before the denunciation of the sentence on the woman, as to sorrow in conception ; with respect to the time and the connexion, merits our attention. that God proclaimed deliverance from sin by means of a deviation from the ordinary law which he had established for the propagation of our species. The curse, written in conception, and transmitted by means of it, was to be removed

<sup>u</sup> Lev. xii. 1.—9.

<sup>v</sup> Gen. iii. 15.



ved by a conception of so extraordinary a nature, that "a woman should compass a man<sup>w</sup>."

This "new thing in the earth" took place, when the Virgin Mary conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. That the Messiah might have a right to redeem us, it was necessary that he should be our near kinsman. He must be of the same stock with ourselves, that he might "not be ashamed to call us brethren," and that his obedience and suffering might be imputed to sinners of the same family. As this was requisite from his character as a Redeemer; it was equally so, from the greatness of that humiliation which was necessary for our redemption. He must "be-  
"come in all things like unto us," as far as this conformity was attainable "without sin." When, therefore, he assumed our nature, without the intervention of man; we may be assured that the only reason of this difference was, that he could not otherwise assume it without being subjected to sin. While the word was really "made flesh," he was made only "in the likeness of *sinful* flesh." Accordingly, we are expressly informed, that this seed of the woman, this "holy thing," is called "the Son of God," in consequence of the "Power of the Highest overshadowing" the Virgin<sup>x</sup>.

What reason have we for the deepest humiliation, when we contemplate our natural state! Well may we cry out with the leper under the law,

<sup>w</sup> Jer. xxxi. 22.

<sup>x</sup> Luke i. 35.

law, "Unclean, unclean!" Let us imitate the exercise of David, in his penitential Psalm, in tracing up our actual transgressions to the corrupt and bitter fountain of original sin. Let us compare our own deformity with that purity which the law requires, and in which we were created in our first father; and this will be our language to the Searcher of hearts: "Behold! thou de-  
" firest truth in the inward parts;" but "I was  
" shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother  
" conceive me." How ill does pride become a fallen, a polluted worm; especially in relation to infinite holiness! Well may "our mouth be stop-  
" ped," in the presence of that God, in whose sight "the heavens are not clean."

Let us beware of accusing divine justice, in entrusting our holiness and felicity in the hand of one person. Let us rather admire his mercy, in providing a remedy. Let us remember that God hath eternally displayed and vindicated the justice of his procedure in the old covenant, by the plan he pursues in the new: and that if we obstinately deny his justice in the imputation of sin, we disclaim any interest in the imputation of righteousness. We cannot renounce our interest in the first Adam, as a representative, without at the same time renouncing all claim to the second. For "*as* by one man's disobedience many were  
" made sinners; *so* by the obedience of one shall  
" many be made righteous."

## SECTION XI.

*The Incarnation of the Son of God.—His frequent Appearance in the likeness of Man, a prelude of this.—Prefigured by the Smoking Furnace and Burning Lamp ;—the Burning Bush ;—Jacob's Ladder ;—the Cloud of Glory.—Respected in the Rights of Primogeniture ;—Law of the Levirate ;—Circumcision ;—Patriarchal Mode of Swearing ;—Abstinence from the Sinew that shrank.*

JESUS CHRIST is the great subject of the Holy Scriptures. “ The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.” The mystery of the incarnation of a divine person is “ without controversy great.” On this mystery, rests the whole doctrine, revealed in the word of God, concerning our salvation. We need not wonder then, that, while this is the subject of so many prophecies and promises, it should also have been exhibited to the faith of the Church, by various symbols and preludes ; or that it was taught, not merely in a doctrinal way, but by historical illustration.

Before

Before entering on the consideration of what is chiefly in view, it may be necessary to observe, that the foundation of the Church's faith, as to the incarnation of a divine person, lay in the first promise. In this it was declared, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. The person, whose appearance is here foretold, being called the *seed* of the *woman*; faith, in embracing the promise, must have viewed him as truly *man*. But such is the nature of the work ascribed to him, that there was an equal necessity for considering him as *God*. The old serpent had already shewn, that man could not enter the lists with him. He had deceived, and been the instrument of destroying our nature; although he found it in a state of innocence. Now, when it is said, "It shall bruise thy head," the meaning is, that the seed of the woman should retort on himself the fatal stroke given by this destroyer; that he should overthrow that external dominion in the world, which he had acquired in consequence of the fall; nay, that he should subdue his power in the heart of man, by the destruction of sin, which, as it is the offspring of the serpent, is the great support of his kingdom. Could faith ever expect the accomplishment of such a work by any mere creature?

If any doubt had remained as to this being the meaning of the first promise, it must have been fully removed by the prediction of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, who expressly declared who it was that should come and "destroy the works  
" of

“of the devil.” For he “prophefied, faying, Be-  
 “hold the Lord cometh :” and this prophecy is  
 by no means to be confined to Chrift’s fecond  
 coming, although it fhall have its full and final  
 completion in this great event.

It has been fuppofed by many learned writers,  
 that our firft parents, after being turned to God,  
 were fo big with expectation of a divine deliver-  
 er, that Eve miftook Cain for him. Therefore  
 they thus render the words that ſhe uttered, on  
 the birth of her firft-born ; “ I have gotten a  
 “ man the Lord z.”

With refpect to the preludes of the incarnation  
 of the eternal Word, the following things may be  
 obferved.

1. This glorious Perfon frequently appeared in  
 the *likenefs of human nature*. His appearance, as  
 the Angel of the LORD, or the Angel-JEHOVAH,  
 we have already confidered, as an evidence that  
 the doctrine of the Trinity was revealed under  
 the Old Teftament. But here it demands our at-  
 tention, that when he revealed himfelf in this  
 character, he often affumed the likenefs of man ;  
 and made himfelf known by fuch language, or  
 fuch acts, as clearly expreffed the work that  
 he was to perform, as “ the Word made flefh,”  
 and refpected his various functions, as the Pro-  
 phet, Prieft, and King of his Church. When the  
 LORD, attended by two of his miniftering fpirits,  
 appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre,  
 they



they seemed to be all clothed with humanity. Hence Abraham took them for three ordinary travellers; and made the same preparations for them, that he was wont to do, when exercising hospitality <sup>a</sup>. It was only by the language of one of these celestial visitors, particularly as foretelling the birth of the promised seed, and by the discovery he made of his heart-searching power in rebuking Sarah for her secret ridicule, that Abraham was undeceived <sup>b</sup>. But during the whole of the interview, this divine person retained the same likeness; and when he arose to depart, was brought on his way by Abraham, as a man is accompanied by his friend.

In the same manner did he appear unto Jacob, when he was preparing to meet with his incensed brother Esau. The patriarch "was left alone; "and there wrestled a man with him until the "breaking of the day <sup>c</sup>." This expression, "he "was left alone," especially as connected with what is previously mentioned concerning his sending all his family "over the brook," is plainly meant to inform us, that he, who wrestled with him, was not one of the sons of men. On this occasion, the Son of God not only assumed the likeness of our nature, so that he might be *seen*; but condescended to assume so near a resemblance of its reality, that he might be *felt*. What a wonderful prelude of that grace which was afterwards to be manifested, when the eyes of the disciples should

<sup>a</sup> Gen. xviii.

<sup>b</sup> Ver. 10. 13.—15.

<sup>c</sup> Gen. xxxii. 24.

should not only see, but handle the self-same Word of life <sup>d</sup>!

Jacob knew that he had wrestled with God; for the thing for which he wrestled was the blessing, which no creature could confer. As the appearance of God in the likeness of man, especially as he made himself known both to the sight and to the touch, was a striking prelude of the incarnation; the testimony given to Jacob, as to his success, included no inconsiderable intimation with respect to the union of the divine and human nature in one person. The Angel said to him: "As a prince hast thou power with God, and with men, and hast prevailed." The word *men* is in the plural, indeed; as implying an assurance of protection wherever he should go, and particularly of his having power over his enraged brother. But what was the pledge of this? His prevalence in this astonishing interview, when he "had power," even in the way of bodily wrestling, "over the angel" who appeared in the form of *man*; because "he had power with" him as "*God*," by his faith and importunity, his tears and supplications <sup>e</sup>.

To inform Jacob, and the Church in succeeding ages, that the condescension of the Son, in assuming our nature, should nowise impair or derogate from his essential majesty and power; this divine wrestler, during the struggle, touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, so that it was out of joint. This is understood of the socket in which the

<sup>d</sup> 1 John i. 1.

<sup>e</sup> Hof. xii. 4.

the ball of the thigh-bone moves : and it has been observed, that such is the situation of this place, that Jacob must have been assured no mere man could have so *touched* it in wrestling, as to have effected a dislocation.

In the same form did he appear unto Joshua, while he blockaded Jericho. " There stood a " man over against him, with his sword drawn in " his hand," who said to him, " As prince of the " host of JEHOVAH am I now come." From this testimony Joshua must have known, that this was he who had been promised as God's Angel, who should go before Israel, and deliver their enemies into their hands <sup>f</sup>. By the form he assumed, it was also declared to Joshua, and by him to the Church, that this Angel should afterwards " partake of flesh and blood." This appearance, indeed, was not merely a prelude of his incarnation in general. It " testified beforehand," that he should be manifested in human nature, as Immanuel, as God with us, " for us," and not " for " our adversaries <sup>g</sup>," as the King and Lord of the Church ; that in this nature he should conquer the serpent and his seed, and exercise absolute dominion over all the enemies of his true Israel. For he said to Joshua, " See, I have given into " thine hand Jericho." It was also declared, that He who should come in our nature, should, even as incarnate, be the object of religious adoration. For, as if the homage given by Joshua, in falling on his face to the earth, and worshipping, had been

<sup>f</sup> Exod. xxiii. 23.

<sup>g</sup> Josh. v. 13.

been too little ; this *man* said to him, “ Loose thy  
“ shoe from off thy foot ; for the place whereon  
“ thou standest is holy <sup>h</sup>. ”

That JEHOVAH appeared in the likeness of man to Gideon, is evident from the fear that seized him, when, by the miraculous consumption of his sacrifice, he perceived that this was a heavenly visitant <sup>i</sup>. That he made a similar appearance to the wife of Manoah, is no less clear from the account she gave to her husband of the visit she had received ; from the prayer afterwards presented by Manoah ; as well as from the questions he put to the Angel, and the amazement of both when they discovered that this was a vision of God <sup>k</sup>. They at first considered him only as “ a man of “ God,” or a prophet. By both these apparitions, the divine Word taught the Church, that he should at length actually appear as her great High-priest. When he consumed the sacrifice of Gideon, by causing fire to rise out of the rock, he symbolically signified, that he should appear both as her priest and sacrifice ; as her priest, presenting an offering acceptable to God through the fire of his own Spirit ; as a sacrifice for expiating all her guilt, as he should himself be burnt in the sufferings of his human nature, by the fire of divine wrath. His ascending in the flame of the altar, when Manoah had presented a burnt-offering, might intimate that, as “ the High-priest of “ our profession,” he would ascend to heaven, and

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<sup>h</sup> Josh. v. 13.—15. ; vi. 1, 2.

<sup>i</sup> Judges vi. 21.

<sup>k</sup> Judges xiii. 6. 9. 21. 17. 21, 22.

enter into the holiest of all, through the merit of his own oblation.

When Moses desired to see the glory of God, he said to him, “Thou shalt see my back-parts<sup>l</sup>.” Hence it is most probable that he saw the likeness of human nature; as an anticipation of that blessed discovery which was afterwards made to him on the mount of transfiguration. It has been supposed, indeed, with great probability, that in this manner God ordinarily communicated his will to Moses; as it is said that he spake with him “face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend<sup>m</sup>.”

By similar manifestations did the Lord comfort his Church, while she was in Babylon, and while she continued in a low state after her return from captivity. Ezekiel, by the river Chebar, saw the likeness of a glorious throne; and “upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it<sup>n</sup>.” No manifestation could tend more to comfort the souls of believers, in their afflicted state in a strange land, than such a prelude of the future incarnation of their God, and of the glorious majesty of his kingdom. After the return of the captives, when they were so weak as to be threatened with destruction from their enemies, Zechariah was favoured with a vision of Christ, as “a man—standing among the myrtle-trees that were in the bottom. Behind him were there red horses speckled and white<sup>o</sup>.” While this vision represented the low and mournful state of the Church, it expressed her safety, from

<sup>l</sup> Exod. xxxiii. 23.

<sup>m</sup> Ver. 11.

<sup>n</sup> Ezek. i. 26.

<sup>o</sup> Zech. i. 9.



from the presence of Christ in the midst of her, as the Lord of all the angels of heaven, whom he employs as his ministers to fulfil his pleasure in the kingdom of providence, in subserviency to the interests of his spiritual kingdom. Many similar visions had this prophet. Particularly, the Angel who appeared to him as a man, expressly foretold his own mission to dwell as the LORD of hosts in the midst of his Church<sup>p</sup>.

The very character of an *Angel* or *Messenger*, under which the Son appeared to the patriarchs, and to the Church under the Old Testament, while it declared that he was then sent by the Father, had a special reference to his future mission in our nature, as “the Angel of the Covenant, who should come to his temple<sup>q</sup>.” The many appearances, which he made in the likeness of man, if not meant as preludes of his actual incarnation, and for confirming the faith of the Church in this most important article, could have no other tendency than to lead her astray to idolatry. These appearances, so far from confirming her faith in that revelation given to her, must have directly frustrated one great end of it, which was to preserve the doctrines of the divine unity and spirituality; and must have proved a snare, inducing her to “change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man<sup>r</sup>.” But when she knew that these were the manifestations of one divine person, solely in relation to a future incarnation for the re-

X 2

demption

p Zech. ii. 3,—11.

q Mal. iii. 1.

r Rom. i. 23.

demption of lost man ; she was guarded against the folly of supposing that God had a human form, or that his pure essence had any affinity to gross matter.

ii. The vision that Abraham had of a *furnace* and *lamp*, when God entered into covenant with him, may be viewed as a prelude of the incarnation. After he had, according to the divine command, divided the various parts of the sacrifice, and “laid each piece one against another ;” when it was dark, he saw a smoking furnace and a burning lamp pass between the pieces<sup>s</sup>. These have been generally viewed as symbols of the affliction of the posterity of Abraham in Egypt, and of their deliverance ; especially as we are informed in the context, that God foretold both the sufferings and the redemption of Israel, and that day entered into covenant with Abraham. Others have understood the *smoking furnace* as an emblem of the sufferings of Christ’s human nature, under the wrath of God as a Judge ; and the *burning lamp*, of his divine to which it is united, in consequence of which union it was impossible that he could succumb under his sufferings ; or of the glory that followed<sup>t</sup>.

It is evident that the sacrifice prefigured that of Christ. The covenant made with Abraham, in as far as it respected spiritual and eternal blessings, was only a revelation of that covenant which had been made from eternity with Him  
who

<sup>s</sup> Gen. xv. 10. 17.

<sup>t</sup> See Edward’s Hist. Redemption, p. 52.

who was promised as the seed of Abraham ; and in this point of view, it derived all its confirmation from the death of the great Sacrifice.

But can there be any thing improper in viewing these symbols, as referring both to the natural seed of Abraham, and to that *one* seed, “ which “ is Christ “ ;” to the former primarily, to the latter ultimately ? We know that Christ is the antitypical Israel ; and that what is spoken by one of the prophets ; “ Out of Egypt have I called my Son “ ,” is by an evangelist understood as referring to the Saviour. We cannot so well perceive the propriety of this application, without supposing such a double reference. There are other passages of Scripture, which can scarcely be otherwise interpreted ; as the language of the Church in the book of Psalms, which seems to include the sufferings both of the type and of the antitype : “ Many a time have they afflicted me from “ my youth, may Israel now say ;—yet they have “ not prevailed against me. The plowers plowed upon my back ; they made long their furrows “ .” The last words undoubtedly allude to Christ’s “ giving his back to the smiters,” and to the deep incisions made by the scourge.

III. The *burning bush* may be viewed as a similar emblem. It has, indeed, been generally understood as shadowing forth the afflictions of Israel in Egypt, and at the same time her preservation by reason of the divine presence. With

X 3

fully

u Gal. iii. 16.

v Hos. xi. 1.; Mat. ii. 15.

w Psal. cxxix. 1.—3.

fully as much propriety may it be viewed as denoting the sufferings of the Messiah. “The Angel of the LORD appeared unto him (Moses) in “a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush: and “he looked, and behold, the bush burned with “fire, and the bush was not consumed. And “Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this “great sight, why the bush is not burned.” He, who appeared, was the Angel of the LORD, who had often before manifested himself in the likeness of man. The *bush* or *bramble*, as the word signifies, was a fit emblem of his humanity, which is represented “as a root springing out of a dry ground.” “The flame of fire” denotes the wrath of God, which burned, but did not consume his human nature. The reason why this could not be consumed, was the inhabitation of the Angel-JEHOVAH. This was indeed “a great sight;” for there was “no sorrow like unto his sorrow, where- “with the LORD afflicted him in the day of his “fierce anger.”

iv. The *ladder*, which Jacob saw in a dream, was a striking symbol of the incarnation. “Behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top “of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels “of God ascending and descending on it. And, “behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am “the LORD God of Abraham thy father.” Our Lord must himself be the best interpreter of this vision; and he explains it to Nathanael in these words,

z Exod. iii. 2, 3.

y Lam. i. 12.

z Gen. xxviii. 12, 13.

words, “ Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and “ the angels of God ascending and descending on “ the Son of man <sup>a</sup>.” Heaven was *shut* against man by his sin. There could be no comfortable intercourse between earth and that better country. But through Christ as Mediator, it is *open*. In his human nature he is as a ladder “ set upon “ the earth ;” in his divine, he “ reaches to heaven ;” by his work as God-man, he unites both. As JEHOVAH “ stood above it ;” this denotes that God, as judge, is reconciled to man, and admits him through Christ to the most intimate fellowship. The angels of God ascend and descend on this ladder. This signifies, that all things in heaven and earth are recapitulated in Christ ; that men are admitted to fellowship with angels ; and that these blessed spirits are constantly employed in ministering to the Mediator, in subserviency to the interests of his kingdom, and to the saints through him. Instead of “ ascending and descending *on*,” some incline to read, “ *to* the Son of man <sup>b</sup>.” But it is evident that the evangelist uses the particle *επι*, the same which occurs in the Septuagint \*, in reference to the use of a ladder ; and if rendered *to*, the force of the allusion would be lost.

## X 4

## v. This

<sup>a</sup> John i. 51.

<sup>b</sup> Vid. Lampe in John i. 51.

\* One would almost think that John, in narrating the language of his Master, had expressed himself in conformity to this version, which was then commonly used by his countrymen. *Οι αγγελοι τε θεου ανιβαινον και καθιβαινον επ' αυτην.* Gen. xxviii. 12. *Τους αγγελους τε θεου αναβαινοντας και καταβαινοντας επι τον τιον τε ανθρωπον.* John i. 51.



v. This was also prefigured by the *cloud* of *glory*, or the *glory* of the *LORD*, which dwelt in the tabernacle and temple. When the Israelites departed from Egypt, “the *LORD* went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night, in a pillar of fire, to give them light <sup>c</sup>.” He, who thus went before them, was Christ; for he is afterwards called “the Angel of God <sup>d</sup>.” After the erection of the tabernacle, “the cloud abode thereon, and the “glory of the *LORD* filled” it <sup>e</sup>. This was a lively emblem of the incarnation of the Word, to whom this expression, “the glory of the *LORD*,” seems to be appropriated, as a personal designation <sup>f</sup>. As the cloud *abode* on the tabernacle, and the glory filled it, in this sense God was said to *dwell among* the children of Israel <sup>g</sup>. The type received its completion, when “the Word,” who is “the brightness of glory,” “was made flesh, “and *dwelt among*” men “as in a tabernacle,” so that they “beheld his glory <sup>h</sup>.” For the human nature of Christ is “the true tabernacle “which God pitched, and not man <sup>i</sup>.” In him “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” That emblematical glory, of which we speak, in like manner filled the temple; and this also was a type of Christ’s human nature. We therefore read of “the temple of his body <sup>k</sup>.”

## vi. The

c Exod. xiii. 21.

d Exod. xiv. 19.

e Exod. xl. 34.

f Isa. xl. 5.

g Exod. xxv. 8.

h John i. 14.

i Heb. viii. 2.

k John ii. 19. 21.

VI. The rights of *primogeniture* had a special respect to the incarnation of the Messiah. These, although confirmed by the law of Moses, were in force long before. They had the divine sanction from a very early period. For God said to Cain, with respect to his younger brother Abel, “If thou doest well, unto thee shall be his desire, and he shall rule over thee <sup>m</sup>.” Thus they were nearly, if not absolutely, coeval with the first promise; as to this they evidently bore a relation. One special honour, restricted to the first-born, was that he should be the ancestor of that seed in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. Thus the birthright was appropriated to Isaac, concerning whom God said to Abraham, “With him will I establish my covenant;” and, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called <sup>n</sup>.” On this account especially, is Esau charged with profanity, in selling his birthright.

As the primogeniture secured this peculiar honour, and was therefore a perpetual memorial of the promise of the Messiah; it was attended with several distinct privileges, which were all expressive of his character. Had the first-born a double portion of his father’s goods? This prefigured him, who is “heir of all things.” Had he dominion over his brethren? This pointed forward to him, who was promised as God’s “first-born, high above the kings of the earth,” “the first-born among many brethren.” Did the first-born, as holy to the Lord, consecrate the rest of

<sup>m</sup> Gen. iv. 7.

<sup>n</sup> Gen. xvii. 21. ; xxi. 12.

of the family? It was a prelude of the work of Christ in our nature, who for our sakes consecrated himself in his sufferings, that he might “purify us as a peculiar people.”

VII. The law of the *levirate* may be viewed in the same light. According to this law, if a man died without leaving children, his brother next in age, or the nearest of kin, was bound to marry the widow of the deceased, and raise up a successor to him. The first-born of this marriage was legally viewed as the descendant of the elder brother, who had died childless<sup>o</sup>. This ordinance was in force before the Mosaic dispensation, as appears from the history of Judah’s family<sup>p</sup>: and some carry it back to the days of Shem, or even of Adam. It was undoubtedly enjoined by divine revelation; and afterwards incorporated into the law given by Moses<sup>q</sup>. While there was a political reason for this ordinance, that inheritances might be preserved in the different families to which they belonged, there can be no ground to doubt that there was a far higher one. The honour of the first-born was thus singularly guarded, that in their successive generations the Israelites might direct their eye to Him who, as “the first-born of every creature,” must “in all things have the pre-eminence<sup>r</sup>.” In every other case, such a connexion was expressly prohibited<sup>s</sup>. When, therefore, there was a positive law,

<sup>o</sup> Deut. xxv. 6.

<sup>p</sup> Gen. xxxviii. 7, 8. &c.

<sup>q</sup> Deut. xxv. 5.—10.

<sup>r</sup> Col. i. 15, 18.

<sup>s</sup> Lev. xviii. 16.; xx. 21.

law, expressly dispensing with another in certain circumstances ; especially as this dispensation respected a law evidently founded on moral principles, and meant to preserve society from such mixtures as are abhorrent to nature ; it could not pass with the Israelites, without exciting a spirit of inquiry as to the mystery it involved.

VIII. As *circumcision* symbolically taught the doctrine of original sin, it also respected the manner in which it should be taken away. It had a relation to the *birth* of a Saviour, who was to appear “ in the likeness of sinful flesh,” and be made sin for us. It was appointed as a seal of the covenant made with Abraham, which especially respected the Messiah who was to spring from him, as descending from Isaac, by whom he was prefigured. As an evidence of this special relation, which the seal of circumcision had to the promised seed, it is worthy of observation, that it was not enjoined on Abraham before the birth of Ishmael, his son by the bond-woman, but at the very time of his receiving the promise of a son by Sarah : nor did he become the father of this child of promise, till he had submitted to this rite<sup>†</sup>.

“ It was particularly in respect of the Messiah,” says the learned Allix, “ that God would have that mark made upon that part of man’s body which is inservient to generation.—God could do nothing more agreeable to the idea the Israelites had of the Messiah, and of his birth,

† Gen. xvii. 10, 15, 16 ; xviii. 10 ; xxi. 1, 2.

“ birth, than to distinguish them by a relation to  
 “ this blessed seed, which he promised them ; as  
 “ God designed, without all question, by that  
 “ means, to oblige the Jews to remember the first  
 “ promise made to mankind ; so no doubt, he in-  
 “ tended by it to fix their minds upon the confi-  
 “ deration of that favour he had shewed to them,  
 “ as well as to Abraham, to distinguish them from  
 “ all the people of the earth, that the Deliverer  
 “ of the world might be born in their common-  
 “ wealth, and from one of their posterity. It  
 “ was the same prospect of the Messiah, which  
 “ made God condemn those to death, who should  
 “ either remain uncircumcised themselves, or leave  
 “ their children so u.”

ix. The mode of *swearing* observed by some  
 of the patriarchs, deserves our attention here. It  
 would appear, that the most ancient and most or-  
 dinary custom was, to lift up the hand. Hence  
 Abraham said to the king of Sodom ; “ I have  
 “ lifted up mine hand to JEHOVAH, the most  
 “ high God, the possessor of heaven and earth v.”  
 But afterwards we find the same patriarch obser-  
 ving a different mode. When he employed his  
 steward Eliezer to take a wife to his son of the  
 daughters of his own people, he said to him ;  
 “ Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh ;  
 “ and I will make thee swear by JEHOVAH, &c.  
 “ —And the servant put his hand under the thigh  
 “ of

u Reflections on the Books of Scripture, Vol. i. Part 2. chap. 15.

v Gen. xiv. 22.



“ of his master, and sware to him concerning that “ matter w.” Some view this rite merely as a token of subjection, as being the manner in which inferiors swore to their superiors x. Others, with much more probability, consider it as having a mystical reference. It has accordingly been interpreted, as either referring to the sign of circumcision, or to the promise of the Messiah. Did it immediately respect circumcision? It appears, then, from what we have already seen, that it must have ultimately referred to the promised seed. It is, however, the judgment of some learned writers, that to this it directly referred. The Messiah was to come out of Abraham’s *loins* or *thigh*. For, with respect to descent, these are used as synonymous terms. Therefore the posterity of Jacob are called the “ souls that came out of Jacob’s *thigh*,” as the word literally signifies y. The same expression is used as to the seventy sons of Gideon z.” It is probable, that the patriarchs still continued to swear by the hand lifted up, in ordinary or civil matters; but that they used the other mode, when swearing in things pertaining to the covenant and promise. As the oath taken by the servant of Abraham, had this reference, because he wished to prevent Isaac from mingling with the idolatrous Canaanites; the other instance, which we have recorded, was of the same kind. Jacob, when dying, took an oath of Joseph, that he should not bury him in Egypt, but  
with

w Gen. xxiv. 2. 9.      x Hiedegger Hist. Patriarch. Vol. 2. p. 135.

y Gen. xlv. 26.; also Exod. i. 5.      z Judg. viii. 30.

with his fathers in the land of promise<sup>a</sup>. Now, as it is said of Joseph himself, that “by *faith* he “gave commandment concerning his bones<sup>b</sup> ;” we cannot reasonably suppose that the conduct of his father, in requiring an oath from him with the same view, proceeded from any inferior principle. From the manner in which Jacob addressed Joseph, it can scarcely be supposed, that he asked him to swear in this peculiar form in token of *inferiority*. Jacob was still his father. But so great was the dignity of Joseph, that Jacob speaks to him as one soliciting a signal favour from his superior: “If now *I have found grace in thy sight*, put, *I pray thee*, thy hand under my “thigh,—bury me not, *I pray thee*, in Egypt.”

x. The custom observed among the posterity of Jacob, of not eating of the *finew* that *shrank*, deserves particular notice. This custom originated from the wonderful struggle that their ancestor had with the Angel-Redeemer, which we have already considered. “The hollow of Jacob’s thigh “was out of joint, while he wrestled with him.— “Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the “finew which shrink, which is upon the hollow “of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob’s thigh in the finew “that shrink<sup>c</sup>.” It has been supposed, that Jacob, by divine inspiration, enjoined this abstinence on his posterity: and indeed the words may be read, “The children of Israel *may* not “eat

<sup>a</sup> Gen. xlvii. 29.—31.

<sup>b</sup> Heb. xi. 22.

<sup>c</sup> Gen. xxxii. 25. 32.

“eat of the finew which shrank.” The mention here made of this rite, if not an express approbation of it, at least implies no censure. It must at any rate be supposed, that there was a special providence of God overruling the observance of this rite, as a perpetual memorial of that unparalleled interview, and of its design. The children, seeing their fathers carefully abstain from eating of this finew, would as naturally say, as concerning the passover, “What mean ye by this?” They could not but reply, that they did it in remembrance of Jacob’s wrestling with God in the appearance of man : and in as far as their knowledge or faith reached, they would explain the relation of this manifestation to the future appearance of the God of Jacob in human nature.

Various have been the opinions entertained, as to the reason of Jacob’s receiving the mark of weakness in this part of his body. I shall venture a conjecture, which seems to arise from what has been already observed, in regard to the singular mode of swearing used by him, as well as by his grandfather. As the Messiah, the promised seed, was to spring from his *thigh* ; might not the all-wise God set this signal mark of human imbecility here, still to remind Jacob and his posterity, that, although he had received the promise of this peculiar *bleffing*, and a renewed confirmation of it on this occasion, it was not his natural birthright, nor procured by his own merit or power, but wholly of grace ? According to this view, it might be the will of God, that Jacob should bear a mark  
of

of weakness, as to that very point in which he was to be honoured above all other men; and have a perpetual lesson of humility, in regard to what would be most apt to excite his natural pride.

This great doctrine, of the incarnation of a divine Person, was revealed comparatively in an obscure manner to the patriarchs and under the law. Yet believers, who lived in these ages, saw the day of Christ; they saw it afar off, and were glad. The promise of the incarnation of Christ was the ground of their hope. This, as connected with a persuasion of his presence in the Church, as that divine Person who should at length actually assume human nature, was the foundation of their triumph over all the enemies who threatened her destruction<sup>d</sup>. Is not the ground of our triumph greatly enlarged? Is not the evidence of our security wonderfully confirmed? God hath been “manifested in the flesh.” Jesus is known as Immanuel. Are not we, then, under still stronger obligations to sing; “The LORD of hosts is *with us*, the God of Jacob is our refuge?”

We have seen, that there were many preludes of the incarnation. Thus he, who from eternity engaged himself as our Surety, early manifested his love to the children of men. These were all testimonies of the infinite pleasure he had in the prospect of his work of mediation in our world. Thus he anticipated his habitation among men.

Did

<sup>d</sup> Isa. vii. 11. 14.; viii. 9, 10.

Did the father delight in him? He delighted in those whom he was in a little to call his brethren. Was he the object of the infinite love of the Father as his essential image? He was equally so, as the Surety of lost man. The Father loved him, because he was to lay down his life. Hence he declares, “I was daily *his delights*, rejoicing all ways before him; rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth; and *my delights* were with the sons of men.” All the infinite love of the Father to him as the Surety, he as it were transferred towards those for whom he had undertaken, in the actings of his love to them. What unspeakable reason have we, then, to “love him who first loved us!”

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## SECTION XII.

*The Miraculous Conception illustrated from the History of Melchizedek;—from various instances of Conception beyond the ordinary course of Nature;—from the Laws given to Israel concerning Virginity.*

GOD did not merely foretell, and in various ways anticipate, the Incarnation of the Word: the Church was also informed, that he should par-

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take



take of our nature in a way different from all mere men. Besides the prophecies concerning his being the seed of the woman, and being born of a virgin, there were various preludes of this wonderful event.

I. From an inspired writer we learn, that the history of *Melchizedek* had a particular reference to the character of the Messiah. Being “without father, and without mother,” he was “made like unto the Son of God<sup>e</sup>.” This language has no respect to his natural birth; for in this respect the king of Salem was undoubtedly like other men. But it refers to the silence of Scripture on this head. For it was the will of God there should be no account of his descent, that he might historically resemble Him, who is without father as man, and without mother as God. The Apostle, indeed, seems to have the official character of Christ especially in his eye; as he had no predecessor in his priestly office: and hence he proves its superiority to that in the family of Aaron. But even those who take the words in this view, admit that they also regard his personal character. This must necessarily be admitted. For had he not been “without father,” as man, he would have wanted that perfection which was requisite according to the nature of the type. “Beginning of days,” after the common course of nature, would have proved an insuperable bar to his being “a priest after the power of an endless life.”

II. In

<sup>e</sup> Heb. vii. 3.

II. In various instances, God manifested his power, in causing women to *conceive* beyond the ordinary course of nature. There were two great obstacles to the accomplishment of the promise made to Abraham, of his having issue by Sarah. She was constitutionally barren; and when the promise was restricted to her posterity, she was past the time of life. Any of these was of itself a sufficient obstacle. Although she had not been barren, no woman had ever proved a mother in her circumstances. Hence her son Isaac was an eminent figure of Christ; because he was conceived, not properly by strength of nature, but by virtue of the promise. This wonderful conception could not but greatly assist faith, with respect to the promise of “the seed of the woman.” It shewed that there was no absurdity in believing that a virgin should conceive. The deadness of Abraham’s body, and of Sarah’s womb, made the one event naturally as impossible as the other. Sarah could, no more than Mary, become a mother, but by a miracle. Isaac was “born after “the Spirit,” in consequence of his miraculous operation; and thus in a striking manner prefigured Him who was conceived by the power of the same divine agent. It is remarkable, that as Sarah and Mary both made substantially the same objection, the same answer is given in both cases; as if the Spirit of inspiration would thus call our attention to the intimate connexion between the two histories. Sarah said, “Shall I of a surety

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“bear

“bear a child, *which am old?*” Mary made a similar objection; “How shall this be, seeing I *know not a man?*” Both are founded on the apparent impossibility of the thing. The reply of the angel to Mary, “With God nothing shall be impossible,” is materially the same with that given to Sarah, “Is any thing too hard for the *LORD?*” This, as expressed in the version of the Old Testament, generally in use among the Jews when the New was written, is almost in the same words with those recorded by Luke: “With God shall any thing be impossible *g?*”

In various respects was Samson a type of Christ; and among others, in the circumstances of his conception. As an angel appeared to the Virgin, foretelling the conception of Him who should save his people from their sins; that of Samson, who was a typical Saviour, was foretold in the same manner. “There was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah, and his wife was barren, and bare not. And the Angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not, but thou shalt conceive and bear a son *h.*”

As God had in ancient times given different displays of his power in this respect, to strengthen the faith, and excite the expectation of his people, as to the completion of the great promise; when the time was at hand, he would awaken their at-  
tention

*g* Μη αδυνατησει παρα τω Θεω ρημα; Gen. xviii. 14. Ουκ αδυνατησει παρα τω Θεω παν ρημα. Luke i. 37.

*h* Judges xiii. 2, 3.

tention by a new display of the same kind. The wife of Zacharias appears as another Sarah. Nay, both Abraham and Sarah seem to be again brought on the stage. For he was an old man, and his wife not only barren, but “well stricken in years.” There were two mysteries conjoined in the birth of Christ; the incarnation of the Angel-JEHOVAH, and his conception in the womb of a virgin. As these things were so extraordinary, two signs are afforded, which might tend to conciliate the faith of that people to whom he was promised. For many ages, God had given no immediate revelation of his will. But on this occasion, there was the vision of an angel, and the conception of an aged and barren woman.

Divine wisdom appeared in the choice of the parents, and in the character of the son, as well as in the concomitant circumstances and the season of this display of divine power. The *parents* had both been long of the highest repute for true religion. “They were both righteous before God, “walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” There could be no reasonable suspicion, that two such persons would combine in imposing a false story on the nation. Zacharias being a priest, what concerned him must have been far better known than if he had been in a private station. Elisabeth, being a near relation of Mary, the latter had the best opportunity of knowing all that concerned this remarkable manifestation. *He*, whose birth was thus distinguished, was no ordinary child.



He was to be the immediate forerunner of the Messiah. The respect which his future office bore to the Saviour, marked him out as the most proper person for a sign of his miraculous conception. Was John to "be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb?" The early appearances of extraordinary wisdom and sanctity, would be a permanent attestation of the truth of the miracles preceding his birth. Such *circumstances* attended this sign, that although the parents had been capable of imposture, no room was left for it. Zacharias was at Jerusalem, in the temple, engaged in his ministration, in the very act of burning incense, while "the whole multitude of the people were praying without," at the time that he was visited by the angel. Zacharias did not believe his testimony, and having demanded a sign of the truth of it, himself became a sign to all who saw him, both of the reality of the vision, and of the danger of incredulity. For he was "dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things were performed." The people at first "perceived that he had seen a vision:" and as he continued in the same state till "the days of his ministration were accomplished," and for several months afterwards; this well-known and extraordinary fact must have excited the wonder and expectation of the great body of the nation. The *season* in which this sign was given, was the most proper that could have been selected. At this time the people in general "looked for redemption in Israel." It

was



was also only a few months before the appearance of that *sign* which JEHOVAH himself was to give <sup>1</sup>. As it prepared the minds of believers, and tended to arouse the body of the nation ; it was especially a mean of confirmation to the faith of Mary. Hence the angel Gabriel, when removing her objection as to the possibility of the fact predicted, refers her to Elisabeth, as a living testimony of the power of God, in removing every natural obstruction to the fulfilment of his promise,—of his power in circumstances that bore the greatest resemblance of her own : “ And behold thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age ; and this is the sixth month with her that was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible <sup>k</sup>. ”

III. The laws, given to the Israelites, concerning *virginity*, seem to have had a special respect to the conception and birth of our Saviour. They were of such a nature as powerfully to interest, not only young women themselves in the preservation of their chastity, but also their parents. When a woman was married, if it was found that she had formerly been seduced ; she was not only to be put to death, but to suffer at “ the door of “ her father’s house <sup>1</sup>. ” The whole family were thus partly involved in her punishment ; because they were all bound to watch over her conduct. This was especially incumbent on her father, in whose house she resided till she removed to that

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of

<sup>1</sup> Isa. vii. 14.<sup>k</sup> Luke i. 5.—37.<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxii. 20, 21.

of her husband. If a damsel was defiled, after being betrothed, before the consummation of her marriage, both she and the man who defiled her were to be put to death <sup>m</sup>. That there might be no imposition, certain tokens were to be produced, attested and examined <sup>n</sup>. The trial by the waters of jealousy, by means of which the truth was miraculously discovered, was another institution which must have had great influence in deterring women from a breach of chastity <sup>o</sup>. They were also subjected to a periodical separation, as unclean. This prevented their being married at this season, and put it out of their power to impose false tokens, in consequence of their situation <sup>p</sup>.

These ordinances were indeed meant for the preservation of chastity in general. But they seem to have been designed to guard the state of virginity, in relation to the miraculous conception of the Saviour. Had the slightest ground of suspicion remained with Joseph, he had different ways of putting Mary to trial, and of obtaining satisfaction to his own mind. From his character as “a just man,” we may be assured that he would by no means have retained her, had he not been fully convinced that she was with child in a supernatural way. All that the promise, or the necessity of the case, expressly required, was, that Jesus should be born of a virgin. This indeed was

<sup>m</sup> Deut. xxii. 23, 24.

<sup>n</sup> Ver. 15.

<sup>o</sup> Num. v. 11.—31.

<sup>p</sup> See this subject treated at large in Allix's *Reflexions on the four last Books of Moses*, chap. 20.

was necessary ; for, as we have formerly seen, he could not otherwise have been free from original depravity. But it was the will of God, that he should be born, not merely of a virgin, but of “ a virgin espoused.” In this, divine wisdom eminently appears. For thus God provided means for authenticating the genealogy of Christ. Being born, after Mary was betrothed, he was legally the child of Joseph ; and among the Jews, the genealogy was especially reckoned by the father. Thus also, a guardian was provided for Mary and her child, during the persecution of Herod. Besides, the circumstance of her being espoused, together with that of Joseph’s taking her to his house, preserved her from being treated by others as a woman lost to virtue. While, on the one hand, her espousals subjected her conduct to the most rigid scrutiny, the reception given her by Joseph, on the other, was a public attestation of her innocence.

We perceive the blessed concurrence of all the Persons of the adorable Trinity in the work of our redemption. It appears with the fullest evidence in the very manner in which Christ received our nature. The Father “ sent forth his Son, made of a woman.” The Son himself “ took on him the form of a servant.” The Holy Ghost “ prepared a body” for him, by sanctifying part of the substance of a virgin. What a wonderful display of love to lost man ! How ardently ought we to love that adorable Father who sent his Son ;  
this

this co-equal Son, who cheerfully came, who said, "In the volume of thy book it is written of me;" that blessed Spirit, who as it were anew began the work of creation for our sakes!

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### SECTION XIII.

*On Substitution and Atonement.—The Doctrine of Substitution known to the Church from the beginning.—Imposition of Hands on the Head of the Victim.—The Victim legally subjected to the Curse.—Atonement made by Blood.—The Covenant confirmed by Sacrifice.—In this the Worship of the Church especially consisted.—The Ceremonial Institute, even by its Defects, directed to a better Atonement.—This prefigured by the Mercy-seat.—The History of the true Expiation contained in the New Testament.*

To proclaim the incarnation of a Divine Person, is only part of the design of the Spirit of inspiration. It was a principal branch of his work, to "testify beforehand the sufferings of Christ." All that is written, with respect to his assumption of our nature, relates to the work of redemption, which from eternity he had engaged to accomplish. The Holy Scriptures, as to their great design

sign and principal object, are just an history of “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

Before the coming of Christ to “take away sin by the sacrifice of himself;” there were especially three different ways in which atonement was made; by the punishment of the guilty person, by the payment of a price, or by the substitution of the innocent for the guilty.

We sometimes read of atonement being made, when the guilty were *punished* in their own *persons*. Thus, when Phineas slew the daring transgressors, who were committing fornication in the camp, it is said that he “made an atonement for the children of Israel.” But it is to be observed, that the atonement in this instance was not made for the sin of the persons immediately concerned. For they perished in their iniquity. It was accepted of God for the congregation in general, for averting that wrath to which they were subjected by this iniquity. For the just God, as Governor of the world, demands from collective bodies the punishment of open transgressors; and if this be refused, he considers the society at large as chargeable with the guilt. So well pleased was he with the zeal of Phineas in executing judgment on this occasion, that the plague, which had gone forth against Israel, because of their transgression in the matter of Peor, was immediately stayed. It was counted unto Phineas “for righteousness in all generations for evermore;” and his family



family was confirmed in the possession of the priesthood. In like manner, God did not "turn from the fierceness of his anger" against his people, till "the accursed thing was destroyed from among them," in the punishment of Achan and his family<sup>u</sup>.

Atonement was also made by the payment of a *price*. "The LORD spake unto Moses, saying, "When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel, after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them when thou numberest them." Half a shekel, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which was the double of that commonly current, was to be given for every male who was twenty years old and above. This was called "the atonement-money of the children of Israel;" and in paying this sum, they "gave an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for their souls<sup>v</sup>." This payment prefigured our being "bought with a price<sup>w</sup>;" although "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." The rich were not to give more, nor the poor less. For all souls are alike precious in the sight of God; and although some are greater sinners than others, nothing less than an atonement of infinite value can be accepted for any one. This price was to be paid by each individual whose age corresponded, every time the Israelites were numbered,

<sup>u</sup> Josh. vii. 12. 26.

<sup>v</sup> Exod. xxx. 11.—16.

<sup>w</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 20.

ed, under the penalty of his losing his life by an immediate stroke of divine justice. Thus God testified, that when he makes inquisition, it is impossible for the sinner to stand before him without an atonement.

But the principal mode of making atonement, was by the *substitution* and *punishment* of the *innocent* instead of the guilty ; or, to express it in one word, by sacrifice. This kind of expiation being the most common among the Israelites, and containing the most striking figure of the true, it demands our particular attention.

1. The doctrine of *substitution* was well known to the Church from the earliest period. As “ A-  
bel offered by faith,” while we know that his offering was “ of the firstlings of his flock,” we may safely infer, that the worship of God by sacrifice was of divine appointment. Now, every sacrifice necessarily implied the idea of substitution. We cannot suppose, that the true worshippers of God were so stupid as to imagine that the offering of brutes could in itself be acceptable to him. They knew, that “ if he were hungry, he would not tell them, because the world is his, and all the fulness thereof ; that he would not eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats.” Did they offer by faith ? Then they must have respected not merely the divine institution, but its design. That God, who required sacrifice, would undoubtedly inform them, that what they inflicted on the innocent victims, which they

they presented to him, was only what themselves deserved.

When the people transgressed, by worshipping the golden calf, Moses, the typical Mediator, who was innocent in this matter, under a deep sense of the necessity both of satisfaction and of substitution, proposed himself as a victim of divine vengeance, instead of the guilty congregation. "Yet now," he said, "if thou wilt, forgive their sin: and if not," if there be no other mode of reconciliation, "blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written \*." But a better Mediator was necessary.

As true worshippers could not apprehend that God took pleasure in sacrifice for its own sake, they must have known that no victim they offered could have any merit; that there was no proportion between the sacrifice of a beast, and the sin of a man. They could not indeed "offer by faith," without looking forward to a better substitute. Without the exercise of faith in the suretiship of the Messiah, their services could not have been accepted. When it is said of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, that they "all died in faith," we learn what this grace principally respected. They had not, as to the substance, "received the promises," but they "saw them afar off, and embraced them †." It was Christ as a Surety, whom, in the promises, they "saw afar off." All their sacrifices bore a direct relation to his "one offering." For in the first promise

\* Exod. xxxii. 32. -

† y Heb. xi. 13.

promise he was expressly revealed as a suffering Saviour. Hence, when addressing the Father concerning that will, by which we are sanctified, through the offering of his own body, he says; “At the *head* of the book it is written of me, I “delight to do thy will.”

11. The *imposition* of *hands* on the head of the victim, is a circumstance which particularly deserves our attention, as a farther proof of substitution in making atonement. This was the injunction with respect to “any man who should “bring an offering.—He shall put his hand upon “the head of the burnt-offering; and it shall be “accepted for him, to make an atonement for “him <sup>a</sup>.” This was an emblem of his transferring his guilt, as far as this could be done, to the victim. If in any instance the whole congregation had sinned ignorantly, and their offence was afterwards known to them, the congregation was to offer a young bullock for the sin, and the elders, as their representatives, were to “lay their “hands on the head of the bullock before the “LORD <sup>b</sup>.” A similar rite was to be observed by the high-priest, on the great day of atonement. He was to “lay both his hands on the head of “the live-goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their “transgressions, in all their sins, putting them on “the head of the goat <sup>c</sup>.” This rite was unworthy

z Psal. xl. 7, 8.

a Lev. i. 4

b Lev. iv. 14, 15.

c Lev. xvi. 21.

thy of the divine institution, and of man's observance ; except as typifying that great act of God's justice in laying upon Christ the iniquities of all his people, and the exercise of their faith in cordially assenting to this act, and embracing him as their only Surety.

III. The victim was thus legally subjected to the *curse* merited by the transgressor. As an evidence of this, all the sin-offerings, whose blood was to be carried into the holy place, were to be burned without the camp, that it might not be defiled <sup>d</sup>. This prefigured Christ's being " made " a curse for us," when substituted as our atoning sacrifice.

We have already viewed the execution of the seven sons of Saul, because of the guilt of their parent in slaying the Gibeonites, as a striking proof of God's visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. The same event contains a remarkable illustration of the doctrines of substitution and atonement. God subjected Israel to a temporary curse, in giving them up to famine for three years, because of Saul and his bloody house. According to the will of God, this curse must be transferred to *seven* of the sons of Saul ; a mystical number, expressive perhaps of the legal perfection of the atonement thus to be made. Although, as far as appears, they were personally innocent, as to this crime, the curse was transferred to them. This appears from the design,

<sup>d</sup> Lev. vi. 30.



design, from the consequence, and from the manner of their punishment. The *design* of their punishment was legally to remove the guilt of innocent blood from the nation of Israel. David, being divinely instructed as to the cause of the famine, said unto the Gibeonites, “What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD?” The *consequence* of the execution and interment of the sufferers was, that “God was entreated for the land.” He accepted the atonement. But there was also something very remarkable in the *manner* of their punishment. From God’s approbation of this whole affair, there can be no reasonable doubt that the Gibeonites were providentially directed, not only as to the atonement that they demanded, but the manner in which they proposed it should be made: “Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up—in Gibeah of Saul.” They propose that themselves should act as priests in this extraordinary sacrifice; and that the punishment should be hanging, the only one pronounced *accursed* by the law. Their language is still more express. They do not merely say, “We will hang them up;” but, “We will hang them up *unto the LORD*,” as victims offered unto him, and solemnly devoted to bear that curse to which the nation had been subjected, and legally to bear it away. The expression is afterwards a little varied, in the narrative of the fact; but so as still to convey the same idea. “They

“hanged them on the hill *before* the LORD<sup>e</sup>.” The legal atonement was to be made for Israel, by means of their suffering in the very same manner in which He was to suffer, who was truly to be made a curse for us, being hanged on a tree; and who was thus to take away the iniquity of his people in one day. God was not entreated for the land, till these men were not only hanged, but buried. This having been long delayed, David viewed it as a matter of such importance that he engaged in the work himself. For according to the law, he that was hanged, was to be buried on the same day, as being “the curse of God<sup>f</sup>.” This ordinance prefigured that the burial of Christ should be a solemn and practical evidence that our sins were covered and removed from God’s sight, so as no more to rise up against us in judgment.

iv. It was necessary that atonement should be made by the shedding of *blood*. What rites soever were used, without this in ordinary cases there was no proper expiation. For “without shedding of blood there is no remission.” It was not enough that the victim was slain: it was necessary that it should be slain by the effusion of blood. This institution referred both to the curse of the broken covenant, and to the manner in which it should be removed. The sentence of the law was, “Dying thou shalt die;” “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Now, it is declared

e 2 Sam. xxi. 1.—14.

f Deut. xxi. 23.

declared that "the blood is the soul," that is, "the life;" not as if the blood were, strictly speaking, either the soul, or the animal life; but because the animal spirits, which are the organs of the soul, are in the blood. It, therefore, was the will of God that the blood of the victim should be shed; not only to shew the reality of its death, as, when the blood is separated from the body, the life is gone; but to declare that the person, for whom it was offered, had forfeited his life, his very soul, to divine justice, and that the law would not mitigate its sentence. In this shedding of blood there was a plain declaration of the substitution of the one for the other, as appears from the language of God to the Israelites; "The life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul;" literally "the *soul* of the flesh is in the blood." For the same word is used, as afterwards when we read of "an atonement for the soul." The life or soul of a beast is not here put on a footing with that of man. But this language is employed to declare that when the blood of a beast was shed, so that death ensued, all the soul which it possessed was given up instead of those for whom it was offered. This mode of offering also fitly prefigured the work of Christ, in "pouring out his soul unto death," in shedding his blood for the remission of sins.

There was but one case, in which atonement could be made, for any particular transgression, without blood. This was merely on the supposition of absolute necessity. If the offerer was so very poor that he could bring nothing that had blood, he might present a small quantity of flour <sup>h</sup>.

“ By the law almost all things were purged “ with blood.” Not only the tabernacle and all the holy vessels, but also the garments of the priests were sprinkled with it <sup>i</sup>. Before there could be any acceptable ministration for others, it was requisite that the priests should make atonement for themselves <sup>k</sup>. For the altar itself an atonement was necessary <sup>l</sup>.

v. Sacrifice was the great mean of *confirming* the *covenant* of grace, as dispensed before the coming of Christ. When God revealed this covenant to Abraham, he commanded him to sacrifice several creatures, and to divide them into different parts <sup>m</sup>. Hence the phrase often used in the Old Testament, and indeed in the passage referred to <sup>n</sup>, of *striking* or *cutting* a covenant ; because it was made by striking the victims, and sometimes by dividing them, as in the sacrifice offered by Abraham. This implied that the parties imprecated a similar vengeance on themselves, if they broke their engagement ; especially as they sometimes passed between the parts of the  
divided

<sup>h</sup> Lev. v. 11.—13.

<sup>i</sup> Exod. xxix. 21.

<sup>k</sup> Lev. xvi. 6.

<sup>l</sup> Exod. xxix. 36.

<sup>m</sup> Gen. xv. 9, 10.

<sup>n</sup> Ver. 18.



divided victims °. When God revealed his covenant, the effusion of blood always referred to the sacrifice of Christ; and signified that the complete satisfaction, made by this sacrifice, was and could be the only foundation of a gracious covenant, and of the restoration of transgressors to the divine favour.

This was the great confirmation of the covenant made with the Israelites. “For when Moses had spoken every precept unto all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats,—and sprinkled both the book and all the people; saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you.” This prefigured the confirmation of the new covenant by blood of infinitely greater value and efficacy.

By this blood, it was at length actually confirmed, in the death of the antitypical Surety. Hence, in “coming to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant,” we also come “to the blood of sprinkling:” and the commemorative cup, in the ordinance of the Supper, is called “the new covenant in his blood.” For as all the saving benefits of the covenant were purchased, they are all confirmed, by this blood, and made over to us as legacies, which have derived full validity from the death of the Testator.

When men entered into leagues of amity with each other, it was also called *striking* a covenant; and it would appear, that as they slaughtered

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beasts,



beasts, it was not merely to feast on them, but as an act of religion <sup>9</sup>. The mode enjoined by God, when he entered into covenant with man, seems to have been the pattern they followed. It is most probable, indeed, either that this plan was adopted in consequence of divine direction; or that the believing patriarchs meant to give greater solemnity to the transaction, by invoking that God as their witness, with whom they had “made a covenant by sacrifice<sup>r</sup>.” They acknowledged him, not only as the Maker of heaven and earth, but in that peculiar and federal character in which he had made himself known to the Church by a revelation of grace.

VI. The *worship* of the Church, from the beginning, especially consisted in sacrifice. Whatever other acts were performed, they were unacceptable, except in as far as they were connected with this. No pure offering could be presented, unless the hands of the worshipper were sprinkled with blood. Read the history of the Church, in relation to her religious services; and for four thousand years it will be found written in the blood of her sacrifices.

The first account given of acceptable worship, is that of the offering of Abel; and as his faith was manifested in this way, we may be assured that the faith of all the antediluvian patriarchs had the same evidence. Were further proof necessary, we have it in Noah’s particular acquaintance

ance with the distinction between clean and unclean beasts or fowls ; which certainly proceeded from the use which had been hitherto made of them in the worship of God. Did divine justice require that the wicked should be “ cut down out of time,” that their “ foundation should be overthrown with a flood ?” Still God could not look with pleasure on the earth. An ablution by water was not sufficient. It must be washed with blood. He could not “ smell a favour of rest,” till Noah, as the high-priest of a new world emerging from the waters, presented a sacrifice “ of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl s.” And it was undoubtedly with a view to this, as the principal service of the Church, that God preserved in the ark those beasts and fowls, which were clean, by sevens ; “ while the unclean were admitted only by two t.”

So fully were the patriarchs convinced of the importance of this worship, that when they took up their residence in any particular place, they no sooner pitched their tent, than they erected an altar. Even while on a journey, if they enjoyed any special token of the divine favour, they halted till they had built an altar, and called on the name of the LORD. While the progress of those, whom the world calls *great*, might, even in an early period, be marked by the remains of their encampments, or by the carcases of those whom they had slain ; the various stations of the patriarchs might be traced by the altars they erected,

as monuments of their reconciliation with God, and of their peace with man<sup>u</sup>.

When God made choice of a peculiar people, for the preservation of his truths and ordinances, the sacrificial worship of the Church was augmented, instead of being diminished. The Passover was not merely to be observed on that night in which the destroying angel passed through, but during the existence of the Church of Israel. We can scarcely conceive a more lively emblem of substitution, than what took place in its first celebration. The Israelites were to sprinkle the blood of the paschal lamb on the door-posts and lintels of their houses ; and wherever this blood was sprinkled, the first-born were saved, while those of the Egyptians were involved in a common destruction. Here the blood of the lamb was evidently substituted and accepted instead of that of the first-born of Israel ; and clearly prefigured the slaying of that " Lamb of God, who " taketh away the sin of the world," by the efficacy of whose " precious blood, as of a lamb " without blemish, and without spot," we are redeemed from eternal destruction.

It was the will of God, that, from the nature of her worship, the Church should constantly be taught the necessity of an atonement. Blood was perpetually streaming before her eyes. The Lamb of God was typically offered every morning, and every evening. On the Sabbath, the oblation was doubled ; two lambs being offered instead of one.

For,

<sup>u</sup> Gen. xii. 7, 8. ; xiii. 3, 4. 18.

For, on this day of spiritual rest, the efficacy of the blood of Jesus is most eminently manifested, in the communication of grace to the souls of men. This sacrifice was offered, both morning and evening, for the whole congregation of Israel, and in their name<sup>v</sup>. This denoted the exercise of all the spiritual Israel, in looking daily to Christ as their sacrifice, through whom alone they have access to God, and in deriving virtue from him as “made unto them sanctification.” A distinct sacrifice was to be offered every new moon<sup>w</sup>. When the Israelites presented their first-fruits, in the feast of harvest, they could not be accepted singly. It was necessary that blood should be offered with them<sup>x</sup>. For however acceptable a sacrifice of thanksgiving be to God, it is acceptable only through the meritorious blood of Christ.

Besides the multitude of sacrifices, occasionally offered for the transgressions of individuals, one day every year was peculiarly appropriated to expiation. It was therefore distinctively denominated “a day of atonement<sup>y</sup>.” Such was the solemnity to be observed on this day, that the high-priest was previously to offer for his own purification, in the same manner as he had done at his first consecration<sup>z</sup>. Notwithstanding the multiplicity of offerings, many sins must have been committed during the course of a year, for which no atonement had been made. The atonement made on this day was therefore meant, for legally taking

v Num. xxviii. 2, 3. 9.

w Ver. 11.

x Lev. xxiii. 18, 19.

y Ver. 27, 28.

z Lev. xvi. 5, 6; ix. 2. 8.



taking away the guilt of sins of every kind, which had been formerly committed, and not expiated. But it was not confined to these. As the atonement was made for the whole congregation, both priests and people; it would seem to have been meant for all their former sins, for there is no exception of any. Thus it at once proclaimed the imperfection of the legal sacrifices, and in a very striking manner prefigured the efficacy of that atonement to be made by the antitypical High-priest, when he should "remove the iniquity of the land in one day <sup>a</sup>."

VII. Even the *defective* nature of the ceremonial institute directed the worshippers to a better atonement. Sacrifice was appointed for some sins, and not for others; appointed for the smallest offences, and not for the greatest. Thus, according to the law, no atonement was provided for idolatry or murder. These crimes, indeed, and others of a like nature, admitted of no legal expiation; because the transgressor was to be punished with death. But as God proclaimed that he was merciful and gracious, pardoning iniquities of every kind, and yet appointed no expiation in some cases; it shewed, that he had a better atonement provided, the efficacy of which might extend even to those who could find no mercy from the law. Of this we have an example in the case of David. God desired not sacrifice or burnt-offering; because none had been appointed for the expiation  
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<sup>a</sup> Zech. iii. 9.



of such crimes. Yet he intimated to him, that he had "taken away his sin." This intimation being made by Him who "will by no means clear the guilty," plainly signified, that divine mercy was exercised in relation to a better atonement than any the law could provide.

VIII. The *mercy-seat* was a permanent figure of a true atonement. As the ark contained the two tables of the law, its lid or covering was overlaid with pure gold; and on this the cloud of glory rested. This was called the *covering mercy-seat*, from a word which primarily signifies to cover, or to overlay with pitch; and in a secondary sense, to expiate, to make reconciliation, and also to pardon. As it interposed between the glory of God and the tables of testimony; it signified the work of Christ, in covering our breaches of the law from the holiness and justice of God, by interposing himself as a Surety. We thus perceive the reason why the same word, which signifies to cover, is used to express the blessing of forgiveness: for when our sins are pardoned, they are covered from the eye of God as a condemning Judge, the perfect righteousness of our Elder Brother being cast over them. It is perhaps not unworthy of observation, that this word occurs but once in its literal and primary signification, to denote the covering of pitch given to the ark in which Noah and his family were saved<sup>b</sup>. As this was necessary for preserving them from the  
waters

<sup>b</sup> Gen. vi. 14,

waters by which the wicked were destroyed ; the *covering* given to another ark represented the necessity of a better defence, as it was a type of the same salvation prefigured by the deliverance of the Church from the deluge <sup>c</sup>.

The word, used to denote the covering of the ark, is by our translators very properly rendered *mercy-seat*. For the Spirit of inspiration employs a term precisely of this meaning, in the New Testament, when Christ is called a *propitiatory* <sup>d</sup> ; the same term indeed, which often occurs in the Septuagint, as expressing the sense of the Hebrew. The literal mercy-seat was a striking emblem of him, “ whom God hath set forth to be a propitiatory.” For not only are our transgressions of the law covered by his righteousness ; but as the typical mercy-seat as it were united the law of God and the visible symbol of his presence in the Church, so in Christ “ mercy and truth are met “ together, righteousness and peace have kissed “ each other.”

On the day of atonement, the mercy-seat was to be sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifices <sup>e</sup>. This shews how we are accepted. It is only because of the atonement which our Redeemer hath made by the sacrifice of himself. Is he “ set forth “ to be a propitiatory,” that is, “ a mercy-seat ?” It is only “ through faith *in his blood*, to declare “ God’s righteousness in the remission of sins.” The blood of the legal sacrifices was to be sprinkled before the mercy-seat seven times. This being

c 1 Pet. iii. 21.

d Rom. iii. 21.

e Lev. xvi. 14.

ing used in Scripture as a mystical number, expressive of perfection, it intimated that he, who "is our propitiation," should give complete satisfaction to divine justice.

When the high-priest entered the most holy place with the blood of the sacrifices, the cloud of incense was to cover the ark and mercy-seat <sup>f</sup>. This testifies, not only that the sacrifice of Christ is "of a sweet-smelling savour;" but that, on the ground of his own oblation, he still effectually intercedes for his people; nay, that all the benefit they derive from his oblation, is immediately the effect of his eternal life as an interceding High-priest.

Wheresoever the professors of the true religion were scattered, they were still to pray towards the mercy-seat <sup>g</sup>. Thus are we taught, that our prayers and other duties can be accepted only through the antitypical propitiatory. Whatever we ask the Father, it must be in the name of Christ; that is, in the exercise of faith in his sacrifice and intercession.

All the fellowship with God, which the Church of Israel enjoyed, was in relation to this type, according to his promise; "There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat <sup>h</sup>." In like manner, there can be no communion with God, no reception of any covenant blessing, no intimation of his love, but through the one Mediator. Our "fellowship is  
" with

<sup>f</sup> Lev. xvi. 13.

xxviii. 2.; Dan. vi. 10.

<sup>g</sup> 1 Kings vi. 16. 19.; viii. 47, 48.; Psal.

<sup>h</sup> Exod. xxv. 22.

“with the Father,” only as he hath “called us  
“to the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our  
“Lord.”

ix. As the Old Testament contains a symbolical representation of the atonement, we have, in the New, a distinct and complete history of the *real* expiation made for sin, by the *sacrifice* of Jesus Christ. From this history it is evident, that the one corresponds with the other, as the substance with its shadow. Under the law, the most usual sacrifice was a lamb, which fitly represented the innocence and meekness of the “Lamb of God,” as well as his usefulness to the Church, supplying her both with food and raiment. Was this offering to be without blemish? Jesus was “holy, harmless, “undefiled and separate from sinners.” Was it to be taken out of the flock? Jesus was “raised “up from among his brethren.” Strength and youth were requisite in the typical victim; and our Saviour suffered in the prime of life. The sacrifice, in the passover, was separated for some time before it was offered. Jesus was separated or set apart, as the Surety for sinners, in the eternal purpose and covenant, in his miraculous conception, and in his solemn inauguration at Jordan. The paschal lamb was thus separated four days; and it has been observed, that Christ made his solemn entry into Jerusalem, nearly about the same time before his suffering<sup>k</sup>. Were the sacrifices under the law hallowed or sanctified, in their being

i Exod. xii. 5.

k John xii. 1. 12.

ing offered to the LORD<sup>l</sup>? Jesus sanctified himself, *for the sake* of his people, in his one offering<sup>m</sup>. Were the hands of the priests, in name of all the congregation of Israel, laid on the victim? The hands of the priests were indeed upon him, whom God had delivered up as our Surety. They conspired with the rulers against him. He was taken by their officers, and crucified at their instigation, the multitude assenting to his death. Was it requisite that not a bone of the paschal lamb should be broken. In him this type was strictly fulfilled, although in this instance there was a deviation from the common mode of treating those who were crucified. Could there be no typical remission “without the shedding of “blood?” From the accidental conduct of one of the heathen soldiers, no less uncommon than the circumstance just now mentioned, the blood of the great Sacrifice was actually shed. The action of the soldier was accidental as to him, as proceeding from the mere wantonness of barbarity; though immutably determined in the counsel of God, and necessary in order to the completion of the prophecies and figures. Was the victim under the law ceremonially accursed? Jesus sustained the curse, bearing the wrath of a holy and sin-avenging God, in our stead. Was the sacrifice, after the blood was shed, to be consumed with that sacred fire which came down from heaven, and burned on the altar? The sacrifice of Christ’s human nature, as presented on  
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<sup>l</sup> Lev. xxii. 1, 2.<sup>m</sup> John xvii. 19.



the altar of the divine, was fired by that holy flame of love, kindled by the Spirit in the heart of our adorable Surety. Was it necessary that incense should be offered with the blood of the victim? Christ not only entered into the holy place not made with hands, with his own blood; but even in the very act of offering, he “made intercession for “the transgressors.” Was the preservation of the life of the high-priest, after he had offered and entered into the presence of God, a token of the legal acceptableness of the sacrifice? The resurrection, ascension, and eternal life of Jesus, as our interceding High-priest, afford the most full and satisfactory evidence of the perfection of his oblation.

From the history of atonement, it is clear that God will not *pardon* sin without a satisfaction to his justice. From the beginning he would not be worshipped without blood, that he might demonstrate to the Church the indispensable necessity of expiation. As all her sacrifices were unacceptable without faith, she was taught that they had no worth in themselves for taking away sin. As the faith required, was that which looked forward to the sacrifice of “the Prince of life;” she was also instructed in the necessity of an atonement of infinite value.

We have at the same time a wonderful display of the *grace* of God. This might be illustrated in a variety of respects. Let one suffice at present. He often informed his worshippers, that  
he

he had no delight in the sacrifices of slain beasts. When his design in appointing them was overlooked, he expressed his detestation at these very sacrifices which he had himself required. Yet, for about four thousand years, he accepted these, granting pardon and eternal life to all who offered them in faith. He bestowed all new-covenant blessings on his people, according to the nature of the dispensation, on the credit of that real atonement which was to be made in the end of ages. The sacrifice of Christ, as it was necessary for the actual purchase of redemption, was also necessary for the vindication of the essential justice of God. Hence it is said, that God hath set forth his Son  
 “ to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to  
 “ declare his righteousness for the remission of sins  
 “ that are past through the forbearance of God ;  
 “ to declare at this time his righteousness, that he  
 “ might be just” to the claims of his own adorable perfections, and yet “ the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus <sup>n</sup>.”

## SECTION XIV.

*The Doctrine of Imputation illustrated,—from the Raiment provided for our First Parents, after the Fall ;—from the Guilty being legally accounted Innocent, in consequence of ceremonial Atonement ; —from the ancient Custom of Feasting on the Sacrifice ;—from the manner in which Salvation was conferred on Believers under the Old Testament.*

WITH the doctrines of Substitution and Atonement, which we have already considered, that of Imputation is most intimately connected. All the three, indeed, are just links of one precious chain. Guilt is imputed to a substitute, that atonement may be made ; atonement is made, that the righteousness procured by it may be imputed to him for whom the punishment was sustained. Thus the guilt of all the elect was imputed to Christ as their Surety. In this character he paid their debt, that his righteousness might be legally accounted theirs. Of this important article of our faith, we have not only a doctrinal, but an historical and symbolical, exhibition.

1. This was taught by the *raiment* which God provided for our first parents, after they had sinned.

ned. "Unto Adam also, and to his wife, did the "LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed "them." Here several things deserve our attention.

This raiment was made of *skins*. It has been generally supposed, that the skins referred to were those of the beasts which our common parents offered in sacrifice, after the revelation of mercy. The passage indeed has been viewed as a proof of the divine institution of sacrifices, immediately after the fall. There is every reason for viewing it in this light, when we consider the character of Christ as "the Lamb slain from the foundation "of the world;" and what has been formerly observed concerning Abel's acceptable sacrifice. He could not have "offered of the firstlings "of the flock—by faith," without a divine warrant; and it is totally improbable that Abel should have been the first who presented an offering of this kind.

The circumstance of God's *making* these garments for them, is very remarkable. This is the only raiment that God himself ever made. But he never works in vain. It was not necessary, that He should deign to perform this work, as if it had been too difficult for them. Although they had needed direction, he could easily have given it. But they had already manifested their ingenuity in "sewing fig-leaves together," for a covering. We must conclude, therefore, that this act of divine condescension was meant to convey

vey spiritual instruction ; that it was a token of his acceptance of their sacrifices, and of his accounting them as innocent as the victims they had offered, as their faith, by means of these, terminated on the spotless innocence of the promised seed. We must view this act of God as a symbolical, but solemn, testimony, that he had provided for them “ a robe of righteousness, and garments “ of salvation.” Did “ the LORD God make” this covering ? And is not the raiment, provided for us in the gospel, “ the righteousness of God ?” Is it not a righteousness fulfilled by a divine Person ?

This covering was made by God, *instead* of that which our first parents had themselves provided. It may thus be viewed as expressive of the excellency of our Redeemer’s righteousness, as opposed to our own ; and as denoting the gracious work which God performs towards the vessels of mercy, in bringing them to renounce all their righteousnesses as filthy rags. They “ made “ themselves *aprons*” only ; but God “ made “ them *coats*.” This might be meant to signify both the extent of their guilt, and of the Surety-righteousness of Jesus. They looked only to the bodily nakedness, and provided a covering for those parts alone, over which modesty draws a veil. But God testifies at once the imperfection of their views, and of their raiment. He declares that the whole man is defiled by sin, and that we cannot appear before him, without raiment that shall



shall completely cover us. For any covering, that the sinner can provide for himself, is “narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.” Their aprons were of *fig-leaves*, and therefore could neither defend them from the storm, nor last for any length of time. The coats that God made were of *skins*; and fitly represented that righteousness, which proves a complete defence, and which endures for ever. By this gracious action, then, our divine Surety, who appeared in Paradise after the fall, symbolically supplied them with “white raiment, that they might be clothed, “and that the shame of their nakedness might “not appear.”

This covering was provided for *both*. “Unto “Adam, and to his wife, did the LORD God make “coats.” Had he meant merely to instruct them in the proper mode of providing a covering for their bodily nakedness, or defending themselves from the inclemency of the weather; it had been enough to make raiment for one, and thus to leave an excitement to diligence. But here also we perceive the mystery of the divine conduct in this action. Both had sinned, and thus lost the garment of original righteousness; therefore, both needed a complete covering. Both believed the promise concerning the seed of the woman, and in the faith of this promise, concurred in offering sacrifice; both, therefore, received the same token of acceptance. “The righteousness of God,” which this raiment prefigured, “is unto all and

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“upon

“ upon all them that believe ; for there is no  
 “ difference. For all have sinned, and come short  
 “ of the glory of God <sup>s</sup>.” Here “ there is neither  
 “ male nor female ; for we are all one in Christ  
 “ Jesus <sup>t</sup>.”

The LORD God not only made these coats for our first parents, but *clothed* them. This doubtless prefigured that work which our gracious God still performs, when he “ justifieth the ungodly.” He it is who clothes them with the garments of salvation, who covers them with the robe of righteousness<sup>u</sup>. It is not enough that he hath made this garment for us, and brought it near in the gospel. Still will we prefer our wretched coverings of fig-leaves, unless God himself put it on us. It is the work of the Father, in his economical character as “ the Judge of all,” to impute the righteousness of the Surety to the sinner, legally to account it his. It is the work of Christ, as our Kinsman-Redeemer, to cast his skirt over us<sup>v</sup>. This gracious work he performs in relation to his Church, as he testifies to her ; “ When I  
 “ passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold,  
 “ thy time was a time of love, and I spread my  
 “ skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness <sup>w</sup>.”

It was in consequence of the *faith* of our first parents, that they were thus covered. When it is said, “ Unto Adam *also*, and to his wife, did  
 “ the LORD God make coats,” there may be a reference, in this connective particle, to the promise  
 previously

<sup>s</sup> Rom. iii. 22, 23.

<sup>t</sup> Gal. iii. 28.

<sup>u</sup> Isa. lxi. 10.

<sup>v</sup> Ruth iii. 9.

<sup>w</sup> Ezek. xvi. 8.

previously revealed, as well as to their faith. For in the verse immediately preceding, we are informed, that “Adam called his wife *Eve*, because she was “the mother of all living:” and this surely expresses his faith in the promise of life by the seed of the woman; and signifies, that he viewed her as the mother of all who should be made alive unto God. For, otherwise, he might rather have called her the mother of all dying; in correspondence with the account elsewhere given of himself<sup>x</sup>. Now, it is only by faith that we are interested in this righteousness. It is indeed put upon us by God. But it is “upon them” only “that believe.” Therefore it is said to be “by “the faith of Jesus Christ.”

Here I shall only observe further, that this whole transaction, both of Adam’s offering sacrifice, and of God’s clothing him with the skins, has been viewed as the origin of that ordinance afterwards given to the Israelites; “The priest “that offereth any man’s burnt-offering, even the “priest shall have to himself the *skin* of the burnt-offering which he hath offered.”

II. He, who according to the law, had been formerly accounted a *transgressor*, was, in consequence of the instituted atonement, *legally viewed as innocent*. What was done by the priest, with respect to leprosy, seems to have a special respect to the blessing of justification. He was to pronounce the person clean or unclean. Now, justifi-

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cation

x 1 Cor. xv. 22.

y Rom. iii. 22.

z Lev. vii. 8.

cation is a legal declaration, that a person is righteous in the sight of God. Even when the plague was already healed, the priest could not pronounce him clean who had been leprous, until he made atonement for him by blood <sup>a</sup>. *Seven* times was he to sprinkle blood “upon him that was to be “cleansed;” which signified the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the sinner, and the *perfection* of his justification, in consequence of this sprinkling. The rite of sprinkling is indeed generally understood, as if it had exclusively denoted our sanctification; but improperly, we apprehend. For the blood of Christ is called “the blood of sprinkling,” and said to “speak better “things” than that of Abel; where its justifying efficacy is evidently meant, as opposed to the condemning cry of the other. And when the blood of Christ, as typified by “the blood of bulls and “of goats,” is said to “purge our conscience “from dead works <sup>b</sup>;” justification is intended as well as sanctification: for these works, as dead, are not only defiling, but damning.

Was the priest not only to make atonement for the leper, but to pronounce him clean? This fitly represents the work of our royal High-priest, who is exalted “to give—forgiveness of sins <sup>c</sup>.” He not only pronounces the spiritual leper clean; but he does so, in consequence of an act of his own sovereign pleasure. He says, “I will, be “thou clean <sup>d</sup>.”

When

<sup>a</sup> Lev. xiv. 7.

<sup>b</sup> Heb. ix. 14, 15.

<sup>c</sup> Acts v. 31.

<sup>d</sup> Matth. viii. 3.

When sacrifice was offered for all Israel, the legal innocence of the victim is represented as imputed to the whole congregation. Hence, with respect to the day of atonement, it is said; “On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, that ye may be *clean from all your sins* before the LORD.”

III. The professors of religion were, in various instances, admitted to *feast* on the *sacrifices* they had offered unto God. This was a token of the acceptance of their persons, as legally justified through the imputation of the innocence of the victims whose blood they had shed. This, it would appear, was a very ancient custom. When Jacob entered into a covenant with Laban, he “offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread.” As a solemn pledge of complete reconciliation, they ate together of what had been offered in sacrifice. Some indeed suppose, that the language means no more than that Jacob killed some of his herd or flock for a feast. But the expression literally is, he “sacrificed a sacrifice;” which cannot, consistently with its ordinary use, be understood of preparation for a common meal. Before the law was given from Sinai, we find Aaron and the elders of Israel feasting in a religious manner on that sacrifice of thanksgiving, which had been made by Jethro the father-in-law of Moses. By the law, it was provided that the people should feast on

g Lev. xvi. 30.

f Gen. xxxi. 54.

g Exod. xviii. 12.



on the peace-offerings, in that place which God was to select for the permanent residence of his sanctuary<sup>h</sup>. All the Israelites, who were not legally unclean, were, according to divine appointment, to feast on the paschal lamb, which had been offered to God in sacrifice, as a figure of Christ. Now, this privilege was a token of divine acceptance, through the sacrifice, as prefiguring that which should be offered for the actual expiation of sin. Something better is conferred on us. Because "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us," we are called to "keep the feast," by faith to feed on him, to eat and drink his blood: and this is given us as a seal of all spiritual blessings, and especially of the imputation of his righteousness. For "this cup," saith Christ, "is the New Testament in my blood, shed for many, for the *remission* of sins."

iv. All the patriarchs and saints under the Old Testament were *saved* by *imputation*. This is evident from their history, as recorded in both parts of the sacred canon; and especially from the beautiful and striking compend given of it in the Epistle to the Hebrews. They were saved, not by their own works, but by faith, as contradistinguished from them all. This their faith respected a revealed righteousness, a righteousness without them, totally different from any internal work of the Spirit, or external holiness. They were not saved by their sacrifices, as if these in themselves had

<sup>h</sup> Lev. vii. 15.; Deut. xii. 5. 7.

had been worthy of divine acceptance ; nor by the act of sacrificing, as an act of obedience to the letter of God's commandment ; but by means of faith, as respecting a better sacrifice, a perfect and everlasting righteousness. Noah was "an heir of the righteousness which is by faith<sup>i</sup>." Abraham "believed God, and it was counted unto him "for righteousness," or as afterwards, "it was "imputed to him for righteousness<sup>k</sup>." This can only be understood of faith, as embracing the righteousness of the promised seed ; not of faith as itself constituting the righteousness of Abraham. For this would directly oppose the whole current of the Apostle's reasoning. This would be to convert faith into a legal work ; to make justification an act of God respecting men as *godly* because of their believing ; to exhibit the reward as, not of grace, but of debt. When it is said, that Noah "became an heir of the righteousness "which is by faith," the very language used implies, that this righteousness is essentially distinct from all that which constitutes our sanctification. A man is not said to "become an heir" of what he hath himself acquired. This expression denotes a legal transmission from another, of what is not primarily one's own. The language respects an adoption, proceeding wholly from grace, of those who are naturally aliens ; and their admission through faith to a participation of that justifying righteousness which is "unto all, and upon "all them that believe."

"Blessed,"

<sup>i</sup> Heb. xi. 7.

<sup>k</sup> Rom. iv. 4. 5. 22.

“Blessed” indeed “is the man to whom the “LORD imputeth not iniquity !” May it be our great concern, and our distinguishing privilege, to partake of this blessedness ! But it can be ours, only as enabled from the heart to renounce all our righteousnesses as filthy rags, and to say in faith, “Surely in JEHOVAH have I righteousnesses.”

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## SECTION XV.

*The Necessity of Almighty Power for changing the Heart, illustrated from the History of Creation ;—from the Inefficacy of the severest Judgments ;—from the History of the promised Seed ;—from the nature of the Victories obtained by Israel ;—from their being still taught to depend solely on God ;—from some Circumstances attending the rebuilding of the Temple ;—from the personal Ministry of Jesus.*

EVERY man, who has carefully and impartially read the Holy Scriptures, must have remarked, that it is evidently the intention of the Spirit of inspiration, to prove in a variety of ways the inefficacy of external means, and to shew the indispensable necessity of almighty power in changing

ging the hearts of men. This is done, not merely of professed design, but often as it were incidentally. As the light of divine truth, with respect to this important subject, beams forth with the greatest lustre, in the express doctrines of revelation ; many of its precious rays are scattered through the history of the Church, and illuminate even the shadows which in part concealed her beauty during the early period of her existence.

1. This doctrine is illustrated by the history of *creation*. It is said perhaps, What hath the original creation of man to do with his salvation from a state of sin? But the connexion is very intimate. The work of God, in the renovation of the heart, is in Scripture frequently represented as a new creation. “ We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works <sup>1</sup>.” “ If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation <sup>m</sup>.” This inspired language remits us to the history of the first creation, as exhibiting the pattern of the second.

All things were made of nothing. There was no pre-existent matter. This fitly represents the natural state of man, as ruined by sin. He hath no actual life, no latent principle of life, or disposition towards it. Or shall we view creation in its first appearance, when “ the earth was without form and void,” or empty ; when “ darkness was upon the face of the deep ?” Have

we

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 10.

<sup>m</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.

we not here a striking representation of the natural situation of the soul? It appears “without form,” totally disordered; the inferior faculties ruling over the superior, the will and affections trampling on the understanding and conscience, spurning all their dictates, and threatening the eternal destruction of the sinner. It is “empty” of every thing, that God calls good. Vanity is the predominant character of the mind. As the soul resembles “the troubled sea,” it is covered with gross darkness; with the darkness of ignorance, of error, and of prejudice.

What was the first work of God in giving form to the confused mass? He created light. This is the very method of his procedure in the new creation. He makes light to enter into the benighted understanding.

In what manner were all things created? How did light receive its being from God? Was it not by a word of almighty power? “He spake, and it was done: He said, Let light be, and light was.” This mode of operation, peculiar to omnipotence, is particularly marked by the Apostle as characterizing the new creation. It is marked with a special reference to the old; as evidently denoting that the same almighty power is not less necessary in the one, than it was in the other. “God, who *commanded* the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.” He not only



only made light to shine by a word of power, but made it to shine "out of darkness." In what a lively manner does this express the work of God in conversion! He still shows that he is that God, who "callesth the things that be not as though they were." He directs his efficacious word to the sinner who is in gross darkness, and makes him "light in the LORD." He says, "Look ye blind;" and at his word they see.

In the first creation, "God divided the light from the darkness." For even after the formation of light, the darkness was not totally dispelled. Thus, in the Christian, two contrary principles remain. But the light is so divided from the darkness, that the former can never be extinguished by the latter.

Were the evening and the morning one day? So is it in the new creation. The evening, the imperfect state of grace in the present life, a state partly clear and partly dark, and the morning of glory at the resurrection, make but one day to the renewed soul. The day of glory hath dawned. He is "changed from glory to glory." His present life, as "hid with Christ," is not substantially different from that which awaits him in heaven. For as he hath the Son, he hath life, even life for evermore. He, who is himself "the Resurrection," says; "I give unto them eternal life."

Each Person of the godhead was engaged in the creation of the world. The Father created all things by the Son. The Holy Spirit  
"moved,"

“ moved,” with an incubating power, “ on the face of the waters,” communicating life. In like manner, “ we are the workmanship of God,” “ created again in *Christ Jesus*. It is the Spirit “ that quickeneth. Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Was man created by God in his image, after his likeness? The same work is performed, the same power is necessary, in the new creation. For “ the new man is renewed in knowledge, after “ the image of him that created him <sup>p</sup>.”

II. This necessity also appears from the *inefficacy* of the severest *judgments*, that have ever been inflicted on men, with respect to any real change. Could any dispensation towards mankind be more awful, or in more expressive characters declare the hatefulnes of sin, than the universal *deluge*? Yet so obdurate was the heart of Ham, that scarcely were the waters of destruction dried up, ere he “ made a mock at sin,” and considered that instance of human imperfection as matter of profane sport, which should have covered him with blushes <sup>q</sup>. How great, and how general was the corruption of the posterity of Noah, even during his own life! He might have seen Terah, the father of Abraham; and we may believe that he still retained the character of “ a “ preacher of righteousness,” and continued to remind his descendants of the procuring cause of the

p Col. iii. 10. Vid. Wits. Oecon. p. 640.

q Gen. ix. 22.

the deluge. Yet before his decease, many of them had apostatized from the true God.

It deserves our particular attention indeed, that what in one place is given as the reason of the deluge, is in another given as the reason why there should never be a second destruction of a similar kind. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.—And the LORD said, I will destroy man, whom I have created.—I will destroy them with the earth." After the deluge, "the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth's." Shall it be imagined that the Spirit of revelation can contradict himself? Or that He, who "is of one mind," should be "turned" to another? Or, that God tried this destruction as an experiment, and determined never to try it again, because it did not answer his purpose? Far be such thoughts from us, as derogatory in the highest degree from the perfection of the only wise God! Whence, then, is the same thing mentioned as the reason of modes of procedure diametrically opposite? This striking connexion, which might at first view appear as a contradiction, lets us know, that God had a twofold design in the deluge; that while he was pleased thus to manifest his detestation of sin, it was at the same time his pleasure to shew that

the most tremendous judgments cannot change the heart of rebellious man. To declare what sin deserves, he calls for a deluge ; and to proclaim the incorrigible nature of the disease, he promises a future exemption from this judgment.

The shocking impurity of the daughters of Lot may be viewed as an illustration of the same truth. Some writers have endeavoured to extenuate their guilt, by supposing that they might reckon the race of men extinct, in consequence of that destruction from which they had escaped : or, that they were actuated by an earnest desire, and perhaps by hope, that the one or other of them might be the mother of the promised seed. But their conduct undoubtedly shows, how little they were affected by the destruction of the cities of the plain. For they were not deterred, even by this awful judgment, from the commission of a crime, which, as being against nature, partook of the general character of that by which their former fellow-citizens were marked out as monuments of divine vengeance.

Here I might also mention the obstinacy of Israel in rebellion, both in the wilderness, and in the land of promise, notwithstanding the many and awful judgments executed on them. This is illustrated in a very striking manner, in the twentieth chapter of Ezekiel. Let us for a moment advert to what has been formerly mentioned. Two hundred and fifty princes, who intruded themselves into the office of the priesthood, had  
been

been destroyed by “ fire from the LORD ;” the earth had opened her mouth, and swallowed up the company of Korah : yet “ *on the morrow* all “ the congregation of Israel murmured against “ Moses and Aaron,” and were “ gathered against “ them,” with this impious language in their mouths ; “ Ye have killed the people of the LORD.” While they accuse Moses and Aaron of sacrilegious murder, they mean to accuse God himself, as if he had acted a cruel and unjust part towards his faithful people. Can any thing more imprefively declare the dreadful obstinacy of man, in rebellion against God, when left to the ways of his own heart ; or the insufficiency of any outward means to reclaim him ?

III. The necessity of an efficacious operation on the heart, may also be illustrated from the history of the *promised seed*. God had not only promised to Abraham, that he should have a son, but sworn that “ in his seed all the families of the “ earth should be blessed.” Abraham waited long for the completion of the promise ; still expecting it according to the course of nature. But it was twenty-five years after the promise was first made, ere it was accomplished †. God was pleased to exercise the faith and patience of the Patriarch, till all hope of his being a father, according to the ordinary course of nature, was gone. He had a son, indeed, born to him while he was yet in his strength. But he was informed

B b 2

that

† Gen. xii. 4. ; xxi. 5.



that this was not the promised child, but that in Isaac his seed should be called. Well might his son be designed “the child of promise;” not only as his birth was matter of promise long before it took place, and as the blessing was to descend in the line of his posterity, he being the destined progenitor of the seed of the woman; but especially because he was born, not according to the common course of nature, but by virtue of the promise. “He who was of the bond-woman was “born *after the flesh*; but he of the free-woman “was *of promise*. Which things are an allegory<sup>u</sup>.” “Against hope,” Abraham is called to “believe in hope.” Nature must be dead, and evidently appear to be so; that the power may be known to proceed wholly from Him “who “quickneth the dead.” For nature can contribute nothing to grace.

Abraham received the promise concerning Isaac before he was circumcised. But it was not fulfilled, till he had submitted to this humiliating rite<sup>v</sup>. As this signified the circumcision of the heart, or the renovation of our nature, the connexion shews—that all spiritual blessings proceed from sovereign grace, and become ours only by the operation of almighty power. The promised blessing was received by the patriarch, only as symbolically “putting off the old man;” whereas Ishmael had been born to him while he was yet uncircumcised. For temporal blessings are conferred even on carnal men: but it is only

<sup>u</sup> Gal. iv. 23, 24.

<sup>v</sup> Gen. xvii. 10. 25.

as being made new creatures, that we can enjoy those which are spiritual.

In like manner, Isaac, the child of promise, lived twenty years in wedlock before he was a father. Rebekah his wife was barren; and it was only in answer to prayer that this natural obstacle to the fulfilment of the promise was removed<sup>w</sup>. The faith of Isaac, of whom the Messiah was to spring, was thus tried nearly as long as that of Abraham, and in a similar way, ere the blessing was given.

iv. The necessity of almighty power to give efficacy to the gospel, is illustrated by the nature of many of the *victories* obtained by God's ancient people. Jericho, the key of Canaan in its state of idolatry, may be viewed as a striking emblem of the kingdom of Satan. But it was subdued by Joshua, whose name by interpretation is Jesus. Was it by force of arms? We may well suppose that the many thousands of Israel were able, by human means, to have conquered this single city. It was, however, the pleasure of God to give them victory in another way. He said to Joshua; "See, *I have given* into thine hand Jericho, "and the king thereof, and the mighty men "of valour." But the Israelites were to employ no ordinary means of warfare. No forts were to be erected, no battering-rams to be employed against the city. Not a hand was to be lifted up to make a breach in its walls, or to cut

B b 3

off

off those who defended them. Their victory was to proceed from the ark of the covenant, which “compassed the city.” The only actual warriors were priests, blowing trumpets. For six days successively were the men of war thus to encompass Jericho, once every day. On the seventh, in the same manner were they to go round it seven times. Then, when the priests blew with the trumpets, and the people “shouted with a great shout, the wall fell down flat” on every side.

Nothing could in a more lively manner represent the nature of the conquests of our Joshua. The preaching of the word is in itself as inadequate for subduing the hearts of sinners, as the blowing of horns could be for overthrowing the walls of Jericho. They had other trumpets, of silver; but those of horn, called cornets, were to be used on this occasion, as they were also used in proclaiming the jubilee; and they were the most proper emblem of the meanness of the instruments God is pleased to employ in the gospel, in proclaiming the acceptable year of the LORD, and liberty to the captive. The Israelites must strictly observe the orders given to Joshua, patiently waiting the time appointed by God for the downfall of the walls of Jericho. Although exposed to the bitter taunts of the heathen inhabitants, as to the supposed inutility of their solemn procession, they must have recourse to no unhalloved means. In this are they emblems of the patience to be exercised by the servants of Christ, in the continued use of the very same means, how unproductive

productive soever they may appear. They must “in all things approve themselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses.” Thus saith the great Apostle of the Gentiles; “Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat.” When God’s appointed time is come, his word shall not return unto him void. One would think that this same inspired writer, when describing the efficacy of the gospel, expressly alluded to the falling of the high walls of Jericho at the sounding of horns. “Though we walk in the flesh,” he says, “we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) casting down imaginations,” or reasonings, “and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

We have a similar instance, in the history of the deliverance of Israel by Gideon. His family was poor in Manasseh, and he was the least in his father’s house<sup>a</sup>. Therefore he is emblematically represented as “a cake of barley-bread;” and as in himself not less unfit to work so great a salvation, than a barley-cake could be to overturn a tent<sup>b</sup>. A look from JEHOVAH communicated to him all the might that he had; and a gracious

B b 4

word

<sup>x</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 4.<sup>y</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 13, 14.<sup>z</sup> 2 Cor. x. 3.—5.<sup>a</sup> Judg. vi. 15.<sup>b</sup> Judg. vii. 13, 14.

word ensured him of all the success he afterwards enjoyed. "The LORD *looked* upon him, and said, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I *sent* thee <sup>c</sup>?" But his might was not to be the proper mean of the salvation of Israel. The honour of this salvation was not to pertain to an arm of flesh. He had at first an army of thirty-two thousand men, But the LORD said to him, "The people that are with thee are *too many* for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, "Mine own hand hath saved me." They were therefore reduced to ten thousand. But "the LORD said to Gideon, The people are yet too many." Accordingly they were reduced to three hundred. Those, to whom the honourable work of delivering Israel was assigned, are brought so low, as to have a dog's mark set on them. For those only, who, in drinking of the water, "lapped, as a dog lappeth," were chosen as the instruments of this deliverance <sup>d</sup>. The only arms with which these men were provided, were trumpets with pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. We have no evidence that a sword was drawn by one of them, or that a single sword was left among all the three hundred. For that expression, which was their word of war, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon," is entirely metaphorical. They were to "stand still and see the salvation of the LORD their God." They were to use no other means

<sup>c</sup> Judg. vi. 14.

<sup>d</sup> Judg. vii. 2.—7.



means of victory than to blow the trumpets, to break the pitchers, and to cry as instructed by their captain. They had no other weapons than—"lamps in their left hands, and trumpets in their right hands to blow withal." But by means of these they obtained a complete victory over their enemies. For "the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow."

Here we have a most striking representation of the manner in which the enemies of Christ are made to fall under him. It is not by the sword of civil power, by the force of human eloquence, or by the influence of moral suasion. In general he employs not the mighty, the noble, or the wise in this warfare; "lest Israel should vaunt themselves." It is still a cake of barley-bread, that overturns the tents of Midian. When the *trumpet* of the gospel is blown, sinners are awakened; and, according to the promise, Christ gives them light. Thus the apostle Paul, when speaking of the efficacy attending the gospel, says; "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure," that is, the inestimable treasure of this divine *light*, "in *earthen vessels*, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Poor, sinful men, however, may engage in this work, only as receiving his commission. No one can expect any success, but in as far as the language

guage of God to Gideon is applicable to him ;  
 “ Have not I sent thee ? ”

Shamgar, the son of Anath, flew six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad, and thus delivered Israel <sup>f</sup>. Samson flew a thousand of the same hostile nation with the jaw-bone of an ass <sup>g</sup>. By means of a smooth stone out of the brook, thrown from a sling, the stripling David afterwards flew their gigantic champion, who had defied the armies of the living God <sup>h</sup>. These were striking proofs of the contemptible character of the means which God employs, for carrying on his conquests in the Church, and over her enemies. The proud Philistine disdained David because of his youth, and was filled with indignation at the despicable equipment of his antagonist, as an insult to his own power, and as robbing him of every shadow of honour in that conquest about which he did not entertain a single doubt. “ Am I a dog,” said he, “ that thou comest against me with “ staves ? ” But David knew that all the human means he could use were inadequate to such a victory. His confidence was therefore wholly in divine power. To Saul he said, “ The LORD that “ delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and “ out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me “ out of the hand of this Philistine.” To him also David said, “ Thou comest to me with a “ sword, and with a spear, and with a shield ; “ but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of “ hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom “ thou

<sup>f</sup> Judg. iii. 31.

<sup>g</sup> Judg. xv. 15.

<sup>h</sup> 1 Sam. xvii. 40. 49.

“thou hast defied. This day the LORD will deliver thee into mine hand,—that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD *sa-  
veth not with sword and spear.*” The following reflection is made by the inspired writer of this history: “So David prevailed over the Philistine, with a sling, and with a stone;—but there was no sword in the hand of David.”

As David was an eminent type of Christ, the manner in which he obtained this victory, remarkably prefigured the conquests of his Son and Lord. Did David cut off the head of Goliath with his own sword? Jesus foiled Satan on the cross; and “by death destroyed him that had the power of death.” David went forth to battle, with a staff, and with a stone. As Jesus is himself the “stone cut out of the mountain without hands<sup>k</sup> ;” the word of the gospel is “the rod of his strength,” by which he rules in the midst of his enemies, and the staff by means of which he guides, sustains, comforts, and protects his people<sup>l</sup>.

v. God taught his ancient Israel to have all their *dependance* on *himself*. Some notice has been taken of this in a former part of the work: but it deserves our particular attention here. When they were about to enter into the promised land, he put them in mind that they had no power in

i 1 Sam. xvii. 37. 45. 47. 50.

k Dan. ii. 34. 45.

l Psal. cx. 2. ; xxiii. 14.

in themselves to subdue the nations that possessed it. “Hear, O Israel, thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven; a people great and tall, the children of the Anakims, whom thou knowest, and of whom thou hast heard say, Who can stand before the children of Anak? Understand therefore this day, that the LORD thy God is he which goeth over before thee as a consuming fire: he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face.—Speak not in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee<sup>m</sup>.” He in the strongest terms expresses his displeasure at carnal confidence: “Curst be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD<sup>n</sup>.” On this account he often punished his people with the greatest severity, and made the very object of their confidence the instrument of their destruction. “Wo to the rebellious children, saith the LORD,—that walk to go down into Egypt, (and have not asked at my mouth), to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt. Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt  
“ your

<sup>m</sup> Deut. ix. 1.—4.

<sup>n</sup> Jer. xvii. 5.

“your confusion.—They were all ashamed of a  
 “people that could not profit them, nor be an  
 “help nor profit, but a shame, and also a re-  
 “proach.”

. These warnings, denunciations and punishments had all a further reference. They indeed immediately respected the literal Israel; and declared their guilt in trusting in any arm, save that which had been so remarkably displayed in their deliverance and protection. But as the temporal salvations given to this people prefigured the everlasting salvation of all the spiritual Israel, the means employed by God to deter them from trusting in an arm of flesh, whether their own or that of any other nation, were ultimately and especially designed to declare the sin and danger of carnal confidence in any shape, as opposed to confidence in that salvation exhibited in the gospel. Hence we find the language, originally appropriated to the guilt of trusting in man for temporal deliverance, transferred to the New Testament, and used to express the still more aggravated iniquity of self-righteousness, or trust in external privileges: “We are the circumcision, who—re-  
 “joice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in  
 “the flesh p.” Nor can we rightly read the language of the Spirit of God, on this subject, in the Old Testament, without understanding it as especially “written for our admonition,” that we may “not trust in ourselves, but in him that raiseth the dead.”

VI. Some



VI. Some of the circumstances attending the rebuilding of the *temple*, after the return of the Jews from their captivity, afford a similar illustration. The very opposition made by their enemies was overruled for the advancement of this work. They did every thing to instigate the supreme authority against that afflicted handful. But the truth of that declaration was manifested ; “ The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD ; “ and he turneth it whithersoever he will.” For “ he turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto “ them, to strengthen their hands in the work of “ the house of the LORD, the God of Israel &.” Were some in danger of “ despising the day of “ small things,” because the glory of this building was so far inferior to that of the former ? Or, were they ready to conclude, that, because of the many obstacles thrown in their way, it would never be finished ? God sent them a message both of comfort and of reproof, expressive of the manner in which his work is conducted in every age : “ Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, “ saith the LORD of hosts.” Concerning Zerubabel, the governor of Judah, he delivers that gracious declaration, which could only have its full accomplishment in the glorious Antitype : “ Who art thou, O great mountain ? before Zerubbabel a plain, a plain ! and he shall bring “ forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, “ Grace, grace unto it &.”

VII. In

VII. In proof of the indispensable necessity of divine power for the salvation of sinners, may I not appeal to the *personal ministry* of our LORD? The great salvation “began to be spoken” by him. He “spake as never man spake.” Nothing but truth proceeded from his lips. He “spake the words of God.” What he had “seen and heard, that he testified.” His enemies were often silenced, and at times captivated by his discourses. He confirmed his doctrines by the most astonishing miracles, such as they could neither disprove nor deny. Yet “no man received his testimony.” He had reason to complain, that he had “laboured in vain,” and that Israel was “not gathered.” “His own received him not.” He wept over Jerusalem, saying, “How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.”

What was the design of this, but to teach us, that human suasion, even in its highest possible perfection, is unavailing? It was the will of God, that the personal ministry of Christ himself should be attended with comparatively little efficacy; to illustrate the necessity of divine power, and to put honour on the ministration of the Spirit. According to the pleasure of the three-one God, all the efficacy of the gospel must immediately proceed from the third Person of the adorable Trinity. It must therefore appear, that the word, as spoken by the human lip of Jesus himself, could  
be

be effectual only in as far as it was accompanied by the power of the Spirit. The effusion of the Holy Ghost was therefore withheld, till the personal ministry of Christ was at an end. But when the disciples received "power from on high," a single sermon, preached by one of them, was attended with far greater success than the whole of Christ's ministry.

Hath God in such a variety of ways declared the inefficacy of means, and the necessity of Almighty power in order to the salvation of man? Let us beware of saying, "Mine own arm hath saved me." It is evident from the whole history of the Church, that it hath still been the design of God, in working salvation, to stain the pride of human glory. Why should we stumble at this stone? If it was the pleasure of JEHOVAH, that boasting should be excluded in all the temporal deliverances of his people; can we rationally suppose, that he will admit them to a partnership with himself, either in the accomplishment, or in the glory, of that salvation which is the chief of all his works? Would he exclude them from the mere sign, and give them a distinguished co-operation in the thing signified? Let us view the language of his ancient people, as descriptive of the exercise of all his spiritual Israel. Let us transfer to the heavenly Canaan, what they uttered concerning the earthly: "We got not the land in possession by our own sword, neither did our own arm save us: but thy right-hand, " and

“and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto us<sup>t</sup>.”

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## SECTION XVI.

*The Doctrine of Particular Redemption illustrated, from the First Promise ;—from the Temporal Redemptions of Israel ;—from the Limitation of the legal Oblations ;—from the History of Redemption as accomplished by Christ.*

THAT our Lord did not die for all mankind, but for a certain number whom the Father from eternity gave to him, is evident not only from a great variety of doctrinal testimonies, but from the whole history of the Church.

1. This truth is discernible in the very *dawn* of revelation. It is distinctly written in the first gospel-promise<sup>u</sup>. There we have a distinction marked between two different seeds. The one is designed the *seed* of the *woman* ; the other, the *seed* of the *serpent*. As Adam, after the revelation of this promise, called Eve “the mother of all living,” because he in the exercise of faith viewed her as the mother of all those who should be made alive unto God ; by the *seed* of the *wo-*

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*man*<sup>t</sup> Psal. xlv. 3.<sup>u</sup> Gen. iii. 15.

*man* we are to understand Christ mystical, Christ the head and all his spiritual seed considered as in him. Now, this seed is expressly distinguished from that of the serpent. Who, then, can these be but the reprobate world left to perish in their sins? Doth God say, "I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed?" This enmity, then, must be mutual. The testimony of God implies, on the one hand, that he permits the seed of the serpent to continue under the power of that natural enmity against Christ and his seed, which is the fruit of their original apostacy in Adam; and, on the other, that he actually implants a principle of enmity in the hearts of the seed of the woman against the devil and his interests. This he does, in communicating the gracious principle of supreme love to himself. For we cannot love God without hating Satan and his works. Enmity against this old serpent necessarily takes place of our natural "enmity against God." Such is the state of matters with respect to the members of Christ's mystical body, and can we suppose that it is reversed as to the Head? Does God put enmity between them and the seed of the serpent; and hath Christ the same love to them that he hath to his own seed? Does not the promise respect him as well as his members? How then can he be an adversary to the seed of the serpent, and yet die for their salvation? In consequence of this enmity, does Christ bruise the *head* of the serpent; and from the same principle, does he purchase



purchase redemption for all his *seed*? The very contrary, surely. In the bruising of his head, we have an awful prelude of their eternal destruction, as adherents to his devoted interests, and as irreconcilable enemies to the Redeemer.

The Apostle Paul teaches us the same doctrine, when explaining the promise made to Abraham. "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ \*." Here he speaks of Christ mystical, as including the Head himself, and all his spiritual seed; who are called "the seed of Abraham," to what nation soever they belong; as being eventually made partakers of like precious faith, and interested in the blessings of that covenant which was revealed to him. But the promise would be to *seeds*, in the strangest sense conceivable; if the blessing promised, an everlasting salvation, had been purchased for the seed of the serpent, no less than for the seed of the woman.

II. The same doctrine receives the fullest elucidation from the *temporal* redemptions of *Israel*. That these were meant as successive figures of the spiritual salvation of the Church, is so evident as scarcely to require illustration. They are all exhibited as branches of his great work of mercy towards her, and as confirmations of his covenant with Abraham, which covenant had a special respect to spiritual and eternal blessings. "He sent redemption unto his people, he hath

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"commanded

“ commanded his covenant for ever.—He remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant. And he brought forth his people with joy; and his chosen with gladness <sup>y</sup>.” This is the very language used with respect to our salvation by Christ. “ Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people:—to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham <sup>z</sup>.” These figurative redemptions were all accomplished by the same divine Person, who at length gave himself a ransom. “ The Angel of his presence saved them.” They contained a display of the same divine and gracious characters: “ In his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them, all the days of old <sup>a</sup>.” They were also, as shall be seen, procured in the way of purchase.

The redemption of Israel was entirely of a *particular* kind; and in this respect a shadow of our redemption by Christ. None but the seed of Jacob were partakers of this mercy. Hence David says; “ What one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to *redeem* for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things, and terrible, for thy land, before thy people which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods <sup>b</sup>?” Similar is the language of Moses; “ Thou in thy mercy  
“ hast

y Psa. cxi. 9.; cv. 42, 43.

a Isa. lxiii. 9.

z Luke i. 68. 72, 73.

b 2 Sam. vii. 23.

“ hast led forth thy people which thou hast re-  
 “ deemed c.”

This was wholly the fruit of *distinguishing* love. *Love* and *redemption* are terms used in Scripture as correlates. We never read of God’s redeeming a people, even in a temporal respect, but as the fruit of love to them as a peculiar people: and the redemption is always limited according to the extent of this love. “ Because he *loved* thy  
 “ fathers, therefore—he *brought thee out* in his  
 “ fight with his mighty power out of Egypt d.”

This typical redemption, so far from being extended to others, was conferred on Israel at their *expence*. When he saved them, the nations that were in a state of enmity were destroyed. He bought them as his peculiar people with the price of blood; and thus gave a striking emblem of the means by which he should, in the fulness of time, redeem all his chosen people. In this sense is it said that they were *purchased*; as the Israelites sung with respect to the Egyptians: “ Fear  
 “ and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a  
 “ stone: till thy people pass over, O LORD, till  
 “ the people pass over, which thou hast purchased e.” To the same purpose JEHOVAH, when revealing himself in the character of a Saviour, reminds his peculiar people of this wonderful evidence of his love: “ I am the LORD thy  
 “ God, the holy One of Israel, thy saviour;”—not the saviour of Egypt, but in a way of distinction,

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c Exod. xv. 13.

d Deut. iv. 37.

e Exod. xv. 16.

inction, nay of exclusion, thy *saviour*. And how does he prove his claim to this character?—"I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life." The meaning of the promise here added is clear from what follows: "Thus saith the LORD your Redeemer, the holy One of Israel, For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and brought down all their nobles." Afterwards, when he hath pointed out Cyrus by name, and particularly described the redemption to be accomplished by his instrumentality, he shows the special design of all this work, in the call given to sinners of every nation to believe in him as a spiritual Redeemer: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth &c."

So clearly was the character of redemption impressed on the whole of God's conduct towards the Israelites, that it does not merely distinguish the termination of their controversy with the Egyptians at the Red Sea, but the preceding events. Every plague, which was inflicted upon Egypt, in the limitation assigned to it, marked out the Israelites as a peculiar people. Thus where we read, with respect to the flies, "I will put a division," the expression literally signifies; "I will put a *redemption* between my people and thy people <sup>h</sup>."

This

<sup>f</sup> Isa. xliii. 3, 4. 14.

<sup>g</sup> Isa. xlv. 22.

<sup>h</sup> Exod. viii. 23.

This was remarkably the case as to the destruction of the first-born. When the LORD smote all the first-born of the Egyptians, he delivered the houses of the Israelites. But in order to this deliverance, it was necessary that they should be typically redeemed by the blood of the paschal lamb: "When he seeth the blood, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you." What an awful distinction was here-made! "He *smote* the Egyptians, and *delivered* our houses <sup>i</sup>." Ever after, the Israelites were to redeem their first-born by paying a price for them: "All the first-born of man among thy children shalt thou redeem." Therefore they are said to be all sanctified unto the LORD<sup>k</sup>.

Both this temporal deliverance, and the ordinances commemorating it, undoubtedly prefigured the eternal redemption of the seed of Christ, by the inestimable price of his blood, "as of a lamb without blemish." Hence they are denominated "the church of the first-born." Like those of Israel, they are a select company, whom the Lord hath set apart for himself.

III. This is also evident from the *limitation* of the legal *oblations*. I do not speak of those which were presented in the name of individuals, but of such as respected the whole congregation of Israel. Of this nature were the morning and evening sacrifices, those which were offered on the great day

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of

<sup>i</sup> Exod. xii. 23. 27.<sup>k</sup> Exod. xiii. 2. 13.



of atonement, and a variety of others. None, who believe the doctrine of Christ's atonement, deny that these were instituted types of his death as the true sacrifice for sin. But none can consistently acknowledge this, and yet affirm that he died for all men. For all these typical oblations, while made for the whole congregation of Israel, were made for them only. These sacrifices were offered up for all Israel; but only as prefiguring the efficacy of the death of Christ, as extending to all the chosen people which constitute the true Israel. The strangers, who received any benefit from the legal oblations, were such only as came to the Israelites. The sacrifices had no respect to the nations around. They were expressly excluded from the congregation of the Lord. Now, if these sacrifices prefigured the atonement to be made by Christ, if at the same time they were limited to the congregation of Israel; his expiation must also be limited as to its objects, else there is no consonancy between the shadow and the substance.

iv. The same thing might be fully demonstrated from the history of *redemption* as accomplished by *Christ*. From the account that himself gives of the intention of his death, it is clear that he did not die for all. He said, "I lay down my life for the sheep." These are evidently a definite number, separated from the rest of mankind. For he distinguishes them, in the description given, from wolves and hirelings, and from others

others to whom he says, "Ye are not of my sheep." He assigns it as one proof of his being the good Shepherd, that he *knows* his sheep<sup>1</sup>. Now, if by these he meant all mankind, why were they thus distinguished, or what merit was there in knowing them, when there could be no mistake, unless devils had been mistaken for men. The extent of his death is so clearly defined in his intercessory prayer, that it seems inconceivable that any one should err on this subject, without obstinately rejecting the light. Although Jesus had power over all flesh, yet it was to be exercised in conferring eternal life on those only whom the Father had given him. For such only did he pray, in contradistinction from the world. For them only did he set himself apart as a sacrifice, and consecrate himself by his sufferings to the work of an interceding High-priest<sup>m</sup>.—But on these things I enlarge not; as they have been often fully illustrated by others, who have written professedly on this subject.

From the observations made, we may perceive how intimately the various branches of the system of error are connected. Deists and Arminians in fact stumble on one stone. The former ridicule the Scriptures, and deny that they are a divine revelation, because they represent God as limiting his love to one nation, to the exclusion of all the rest of the world. The latter reject the very same doctrine in another form, not indeed as respecting any particular nation, but in reference

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<sup>1</sup> John x. 12.—15. 26. 27.<sup>m</sup> Chap. xvii. 2. 9. 19.

to particular persons. The Deist stumbles at the doctrine of the literal, the Arminian at that of the spiritual, Israel. Both are shocked at the idea of divine sovereignty, and deny that God hath a right to do with his own what seemeth him good.

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## SECTION XVII.

*The Conservation of Believers illustrated, from the History of Israel.—The Perpetuity of God's Love to the Seed of Jacob.—His Faithfulness.—The Stability of his Covenant.—His Love to David.—Israel united to God, as a Peculiar People.—A Precious Seed still preserved among them.—The Spirit given to them.—Israel saved at the Intercession of his Servants.—Preserved by a constant Exercise of Almighty Power, by the Hand of the Angel promised as their Leader.*

THE doctrine of the preservation of all believers, in a state of grace, is most clearly taught in the word of God, affords the most abundant ground of consolation, and will furnish all who truly understand it with the most powerful excitement to duty. This precious truth has been a thousand times illustrated from a variety of doctrinal

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trinal passages of Scripture. It has been shown that all real Christians are secured in their gracious state, by virtue of the everlasting and sovereign love of God, by his faithfulness, by the immutability of his covenant, by the merit of the Redeemer, by their union to him, and to the Father in him, by the incorruptible seed of the word remaining in them, by the inhabitation of his Spirit, by the intercession of Christ, and as kept by almighty power. It is unnecessary, and it would be a deviation from the design of this work, to attempt an illustration of these arguments in a doctrinal manner. But it is worthy of particular attention, that the Spirit of inspiration, even in the historical parts of Scripture, supplies us with illustrations precisely of the same kind; only adapted to the peculiar circumstances of God's ancient people. Now, as we have formerly seen, that they prefigured the true Israel; their history, in this respect, is undoubtedly meant for the confirmation of our faith.

1. The perpetuity of God's *love* is assigned as the reason why he would not forsake the seed of Jacob, notwithstanding their iniquities. The sovereignty of this love also beams forth with distinguished lustre, in his conduct towards them. Both these characters are clearly expressed in the message delivered by the prophet Jeremiah; "Thus saith the LORD, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness, even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.

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“The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.” That same sovereignty of love, which was at first displayed in the choice of this “nation not desirable,” was conspicuous in their continued preservation, although they were still provoking the God of their mercy. How lively a figure of the permanent manifestation of the same adorable character towards all his spiritual Israel! It is only because he “rests in his love,” and because this love still triumphantly overlooks our continued demerit, that he does not destroy us.

The Israelites are taught to ascribe their redemption from Egypt, not merely in general, but in all the several steps of it, to sovereign grace. The frequent repetitions, in the hundred and thirty-sixth Psalm, are by no means “vain repetitions.” This is the principal note in their anthem of praise; “For his mercy endureth for ever.” For it is not so much the design of God, that his people should commemorate the deliverance itself, as the cause of it. Without this, he hath no glory; men view even his greatest works only in a selfish light, as subservient to their interest, not as displaying his adorable perfections. In this psalm, his mercy is celebrated in those things in which it may appear there was no mercy; in overthrowing Pharaoh and his host, in destroying Sihon and Og. But as his mercy was displayed towards Israel



rael in the literal deliverance ; it shadowed forth his special mercy towards his redeemed people, in the destruction of all their spiritual enemies, that they may “ serve him without fear.”

But they were not only to celebrate his sovereign mercy in the various steps of one deliverance ; they were to ascribe all their deliverances to the same cause. As we have already seen, they needed a perpetual display of the same unmerited love <sup>p</sup>.

11. Is the *faithfulness* of God to his promise another ground of security to his people ? Similar was the display of his faithfulness to the typical Israel. They dealt unfaithfully towards him. But without considering their guilt as an obstacle to the manifestation of his grace, he “ remember-  
“ ed his holy promise <sup>q</sup>.” Thus had they reason to testify, after long experience ; “ There hath  
“ not failed one word of all his good promise  
“ which he promised by the hand of Moses his  
“ servant <sup>r</sup>.”

God would not suffer Balaam to curse Israel, notwithstanding all his sacrifices ; nor would he himself curse them, notwithstanding all the devices employed by that wicked prophet to subject them to divine indignation, by seducing them to sin. He was forced to exclaim ; “ Surely there  
“ is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is  
“ there any divination against Israel <sup>s</sup>.” Long  
after

<sup>p</sup> Numb. xiv. 19.

<sup>q</sup> Psal. cv. 42.

<sup>r</sup> 1 Kings viii. 56.

<sup>s</sup> Numb. xxiii. 23.

after this event, the LORD reminds Israel of it, that they might be convinced of the rectitude of his conduct, and of his faithfulness towards them :  
 “ O my people, remember now what Balak king  
 “ of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of  
 “ Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal,  
 “ that ye may know the righteousness of the  
 “ LORD.” On this part of their history, Moses makes the following reflection : “ The LORD thy  
 “ God would not hearken to Balaam : but the  
 “ LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing  
 “ unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved  
 “ thee.” And is it not thus that he still deals with his true Israel ? Satan, like his servant Balaam, tempts the saints to sin, accuses them to God, and exerts himself to the utmost to prevail with God to curse them, by breaking his gracious promise. But their loving father overrules the temptations of this adversary, and even their falls, for their good. By these he teaches them watchfulness, humility and dependence on himself. He increases their stock of Christian experience : and thus, in various respects, “ turns the curse into a  
 “ blessing.”

III. The stability of the *covenant* was another ground of the security of Israel. When God describes them as “ pining away in their iniquity in their enemies lands,” he adds ; “ If  
 “ they shall confess their iniquity,—then will I  
 “ remember my covenant with Jacob, and also  
 “ my

“ my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant  
 “ with Abraham will I remember ; and I will  
 “ remember the land. The land also shall be left  
 “ of them, and shall enjoy her Sabbaths, while  
 “ she lieth desolate without them : and they shall  
 “ accept of the punishment of their iniquity ; be-  
 “ cause, even because they despised my judg-  
 “ ments, and because their soul abhorred my sta-  
 “ tutes. And yet for all that, when they be in  
 “ the land of their enemies, I will not cast them  
 “ away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy  
 “ them utterly, and to break my covenant with  
 “ them : for I am the LORD their God v.” Thus  
 we perceive, that the severest visitations of the  
 Jews, even that of their captivity in Babylon,  
 were within the compass of the everlasting cove-  
 nant ; not meant for disannulling this, but in sub-  
 serviency to it. Even when he remembered the  
 land, so as to cause it to enjoy those sabbatical  
 years which had been neglected through the dis-  
 obedience of his people, he at the same time re-  
 membered his covenant with them, overruling  
 their adversities for their good. The covenant he  
 remembered, being that made with Abraham,  
 was, as to its principal substance, the same cove-  
 nant of grace made in Christ with all the spiritual  
 Israel. Hence the rod, with which he smote  
 them, was the chastening of sons.

That covenant of royalty, which God made  
 with David, was an illustrious type of the cove-  
 nant of grace. It was indeed one special medium  
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of the administration of this covenant under the Old Testament ; and eminently subservient to the more spiritual and glorious administration of it under the New. In this covenant of royalty, God graciously engaged to his servant, that he should never want a man to sit on his throne. This covenant he confirmed by his oath : “ Once have I “ sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto “ David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his “ throne as the sun before me <sup>w</sup>.” In reference to Solomon it is said : “ I will be his father, and “ he shall be my son.” Even his great apostacy was not to deprive him of this parental love, as God declared to David : “ If he commit iniquity, “ I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with “ the stripes of the children of men ; but my “ mercy shall not depart away from him, as I “ took it from Saul, whom I put away before “ thee <sup>x</sup>.”

These two princes, Saul and David, appear as emblems of the first, and of the last Adam. The characters of the legal, and of the evangelical covenant, are illustrated by their history. Saul was acceptable to Israel, as pleasing the carnal eye <sup>y</sup>, but not approved of God ; David was chosen of Him, but despised by the people, who were subjected to him only in consequence of the display of his power, and the reduction of the house of Saul. The kingdom was lost to Saul, and to his posterity, on account of one act of disobedience ; and so completely lost, that there was no possibility

<sup>w</sup> Psal. lxxxix. 35, 36.

<sup>x</sup> 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15.

<sup>y</sup> 1 Sam. x. 23, 24.

lity of restoration<sup>z</sup>. The reduction of the power of this family, however, was gradual, and the result of many struggles. “There was long war “between the house of Saul, and the house “of David : but David waxed stronger and “stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker “and weaker<sup>a</sup>.” When David was established in the kingdom, none of the family of Saul could partake of any favour, but as holding of him, and as debtors to his bounty.

Is it not thus as to the two covenants? We naturally prefer salvation by works. The idea pleases the pride of our hearts. But we are unwilling to say ; “Thine are we, O David !” We will never sincerely utter this language, till the power of the law as a covenant be broken, till we be loosed from its yoke, and learn, by the light of the Spirit, that Jesus is He of whom the Father hath said ; “By the hand of my servant David I “will save my people Israel,—out of the hand of “all their enemies<sup>b</sup>.”—“By *one* offence many “were made sinners.” The way of salvation by the covenant of works is for ever barred. God eternally rejected the first Adam as a head of life to his posterity. The second Adam indeed could not fail. But his seed are chargeable with manifold iniquities. His mercy, however, departs not from them, as it was taken from the first Adam, according to the tenor of the covenant of works. The calamities of all who continue the seed of the first Adam, like those of the posterity of Saul,

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are

z 1 Sam. xv. 23. .

a 2 Sam. iii. 1.

b Ver. 19.



are penal. But behold the character of the new covenant in the afflictions of the family of David : “ I will visit their transgression with the rod, and “ their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my “ loving-kindness will I not *utterly* take from “ him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My co- “ venant will I not break, nor alter the thing that “ is gone out of my lips <sup>c</sup>.” What could be the design of this, but to shew the stability of the covenant of grace, and to declare in the liveliest manner, by pattern, that he would not *utterly* forsake any who belong to it, or suffer them to fall totally or finally away from him ? Hence the blessings of this covenant, as purchased by the death, and confirmed by the resurrection of Christ, are all designed “ the sure mercies of David <sup>d</sup>.”

None of the posterity of the first Adam can have life, as holding of him. They can receive it only by a new tenure, as becoming the seed of the second Adam ; as being absolute debtors to his mercy ; like Mephibosheth, “ eating bread always at his table <sup>e</sup>.” But in the soul of the Christian there are still two opposite interests. “ What will ye see in the Shulamite ? as it were “ the <sup>f</sup> company of two armies <sup>f</sup> ?” The advancement of grace is often very slow, sometimes imperceptible ; but its final victory is certain. The elder shall serve the younger. There are many hard combats : but the house of David shall wax stronger

c Psal. lxxxix. 32.—34.

e 2 Sam. ix. 10.

d Isa. lv. 3. ; Acts xiii. 34.

f Song vi. 13.

stronger and stronger, while that of Saul becomes weaker and weaker.

The Spirit of inspiration frequently marks a very important distinction between the conduct of God towards the house of Israel, consisting of the ten tribes which revolted from the family of David, and that towards the house of Judah. In the course of two hundred and fifty-four years, the throne of the ten tribes had passed through nine different families. Various kinds of carnal policy were employed by Jeroboam the son of Nebat ; as the change of religion, of the place of sacrifice, and of the priesthood. These succeeded so far as to keep the ten tribes from returning to the dominion of the house of David ; but they could not secure the succession in any one family. Nor could all the cruelties exercised by Jehu and others, towards the seed-royal, give any greater security. During this period, the family of David, without any interruption, possessed the kingdom of Judah. Not till an hundred and thirty-four years after the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, were the Jews carried captive to Babylon. Even in Babylon, the royal authority was not entirely taken away from the house of David. After seventy years, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with a few adherents from the remains of the ten tribes, were allowed to return to Palestine, and to enjoy a government of their own. Although this government differed in its form from that which preceded the captivity, the supreme authority still continued in the family of David.

Nor was it entirely withdrawn from this family, till about the time of our Saviour's appearance ; when it was necessary that the prophecy of Jacob should be fulfilled. The sceptre did not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, till Shiloh came.

Did we view things with the carnal eye, it would appear surprising, and indeed unaccountable, that the throne of Judah should be more stable than that of Ephraim. The former had far less extent of territory than the latter. It could bear no comparison as to the number of subjects. Of consequence, its temporal resources were greatly inferior. Shall we conclude, therefore, that the kingdom of Judah was preserved because of the superior worth of the princes, or piety of the people ? Such a conclusion would be entirely contrary to the history given in the sacred records. If we compare the character of Judah with that of the ten tribes, when the latter were carried captive, we will discern no ground of preference. Yet the Israelites were deprived of their national character ; while the Jews were preserved. The former were carried into a captivity from which they have never yet returned ; but the captivity of the latter continued only for seventy years. Both are said to be cast out of his sight. But the rejection of the ten tribes was penal, that of the Jews merely corrective. The one was total, the other only temporary. Of the Israelites it is said ; “ They left  
“ all the commandments of the LORD their God,  
“ and

“ and made them molten images, even two calves,  
 “ and made a grove, and worshipped all the host  
 “ of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused  
 “ their sons and their daughters to pass through  
 “ the fire, and used divination and incantment,  
 “ and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of  
 “ the LORD, to provoke him to anger. There-  
 “ fore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and  
 “ removed them out of his sight, there was *none*  
 “ *left but the tribe of Judah only.* And Judah  
 “ kept not the commandments of the LORD their  
 “ God, but *walked in the statutes of Israel* which  
 “ they made. And the LORD *rejected all the seed*  
 “ *of Israel,* and afflicted them, and delivered them  
 “ into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them  
 “ out of his sight g.” It was in the reign of Ho-  
 shea that the Israelites were carried captive. Con-  
 temporary with him was Ahaz king of Judah.  
 Now, observe his character. “ He walked in the  
 “ ways of the kings of Israel, and made also  
 “ molten images for Baalim. Moreover, he burnt  
 “ incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and  
 “ burnt his children in the fire, after the abomi-  
 “ nations of the heathen whom the LORD had  
 “ cast out before the children of Israel. He sa-  
 “ crificed also, and burnt incense on the high  
 “ places, and on the hills, and under every green  
 “ tree.” But although the LORD chastised the  
 Jews, by suffering many of them to be taken cap-  
 tive by the Israelites, he immediately delivered  
 them from this captivity ; while he gave up their

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spoilers

spoilors to a perpetual desolation<sup>h</sup>. If there was any preference between these guilty nations, it belonged to the ten tribes: because, instead of being warned by their awful fate, the Jews continued in the same wicked course; or when they professed to repent, did it hypocritically. “I saw,” saith God, “when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery, I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce: yet her treacherous sister feared not, but went and played the harlot also.—Yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah<sup>i</sup>.”

There is thus no room left to suppose, that God rejected the ten tribes because of their apostacy, and retained that of Judah, as faithfully adhering to him. Both apostatized; and Judah is represented as the most guilty of the two. What reason then can we assign for the difference of their fate? God was pleased to display his own sovereignty. “He *refused* the tabernacle of Joseph, and *chose not* the tribe of Ephraim: but *chose* the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved<sup>k</sup>.” As little are we to imagine that he left the Israelites, because they refused to return to his ordinances; and preserved the Jews, because they obeyed his voice in forsaking their courses

<sup>h</sup> 2 Chron. xxviii. 2.—15.

<sup>i</sup> Jer. iii. 9.—11.

<sup>k</sup> Psal. lxxviii. 67, 68.



courses of apostacy. For we have seen that Judah turned only *feignedly*. He could just as easily have retained the ten tribes in adherence to his worship, or recovered them from their apostacy, as he did the Jews. But he would make it evident that the preservation of his ordinances proceeded solely from himself; and that the safety of Judah depended on his immutable covenant; whereas the kingdom of Ephraim had no such security. “Jehoram walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab.—Howbeit the LORD *would* not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and as he promised to give a light to him and to his sons for ever!”

We have thus a remarkable figure of the difference of the divine conduct towards those who make the same profession. He suffers some to “draw back to perdition,” while he preserves others, or reclaims them from many partial apostacies, although in themselves no better than the former. He shews that it is He only who “maketh to differ.” The light of one he permits to be extinguished; that of another he makes to “shine more and more unto a perfect day.” He hath been pleased to leave the one under the power of the old covenant. The other hath been brought into the bond of the new; and notwithstanding daily departures, and sometimes

of a very heinous nature, he “ remembers his “ holy covenant.”

He afflicts them for their iniquities ; but it is in measure. “ Hath he smitten him, as he smote “ those that smote him ? or is he slain according “ to the slaughter of those that are slain by him ? “ In measure when it shooteth forth, thou wilt “ debate with it : he stayeth his rough wind in “ the day of the east-wind. By this, therefore, “ shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this “ is all the fruit to take away his sin<sup>m</sup>.” No period is limited in the threatenings of the desolations of Ephraim. But as Tyre was to be “ for- “ gotten seventy years, *according to the days of “ one king<sup>n</sup>*,” God would suffer Judah to be afflicted only for the same period, that is, during the ordinary term of the life of a man, the days of whose years are threescore years and ten<sup>o</sup> : as if he would give us an emblem of the afflictions of his own children, which continue only during this present life, in which they receive all their “ evil things<sup>p</sup>,” whereas the punishment of others is eternal.

iv. The Lord continued his kindness to Judah, for *David's sake*. It is generally allowed, that he was the most illustrious personal type of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is often expressly called by his name<sup>q</sup> ; and in this respect he eminently prefigured him, that, after his death, ma-

ny

m Isa. xxvii. 7.—9.

n Isa. xxiii. 15.

o Psal. xc. 10.

p Luke xvi. 25.  
28. ; Hof. iii. 5.

q Jer. xxx. 9. ; Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24. ; xxxvii. 24.—

ny signal mercies were conferred on his kingdom for his sake. On this account God would not utterly cut off the tribe of Judah, nor even dethrone his posterity, notwithstanding their wickedness. Solomon was chargeable with great apostacy. But the LORD would not deprive him of any part of the kingdom, nor his son of the whole, “for David his servant’s sake.” Abijam, one of his descendants, was a wicked king. “Nevertheless, for David’s sake did the LORD his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem : because David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.” Joram “walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab. —Yet the LORD would not destroy Judah for David his servant’s sake.”

God had respect to the obedience and sufferings of this man “after his own heart.” He allowed his people to use this as their plea : “LORD, remember David and all his afflictions. For thy servant David’s sake, turn not away the face of thine anointed.” Nor was their plea rejected. This was his gracious answer ; “There will I make the horn of David to bud : I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame : but upon himself

r 1 Kings xi. 12, 13, 32, 34.

s 1 Kings xv. 1.—5,

t 2 Kings viii. 18, 19.

“self shall his crown flourish u.”—“My mercy  
 “will I keep for him for evermore, and my co-  
 “venant shall stand fast with him. His seed al-  
 “so will I make to endure for ever, and his throne  
 “as the days of heaven v.”

David at times seems to plead his own merit, and to speak in language inconsistent with that sense of unworthiness which he elsewhere expresses, and which always becomes a transgressor. One while we find him saying, “The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me w.” At another time he speaks very differently; “Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified x.” Did the royal prophet contradict himself? No, surely. But in the latter passage, he speaks properly in his own person, as a sinful man. In the former, he personates the just One, whose “word was in his tongue.”

As God promised that he would not destroy Judah for David’s sake, he gives his people a precious type of the ground on which he preserves them in a state of grace, notwithstanding the multitude of their provocations. It is not for their own, but for Christ’s sake. He ever remembers all the *afflictions* of our New-Testament David, his obedience unto death. Therefore he will not utterly cast us off, although we daily deserve it.

Under

u Psal. cxxxii. 1. 10, 17, 18.

w Psal. xviii. 20.

v Psal. lxxxix. 28, 29.

x Psal. cxlii. 2.

Under the Old Testament, the Messiah, although not yet come, was exhibited as the safeguard of the Church in that period. When, because of prevailing wickedness, a powerful confederacy was formed by Syria and Israel, for the utter destruction of Judah, so that both king and people were ready to despair of deliverance; they were both directed to the promised Messiah as their blessed security. "The LORD himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." To the same quarter were they directed to look for deliverance from the powerful army of the king of Assyria, whose irruption is thus foretold, by an allusion to an overwhelming inundation; "He shall pass through Judah, he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck, and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel." But their defence lay in this very name. The relation which the land bore to him who was called by it, was the great demonstration of the arrogance, impiety, and folly of the invader. This was the *land of Immanuel*. Its inhabitants, therefore, have the language of defiance and of triumph put in their mouths: "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it



“it shall not stand : *for God is with us* <sup>2</sup>.” Here we have at once the interpretation of the name *Immanuel*, and the mystery of their preservation. The same ground of security, against destruction from the same scourge, is otherwise expressed afterwards : “O my people, that dwelleth in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian : he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt.” But he shall be no more able to effect thy destruction, than was Egypt. Thy deliverance shall resemble that which thou hadst from Pharaoh. “The LORD of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him : and as his rod was upon the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt,” with a destruction equally sudden and complete. “It shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of *the anointing* <sup>3</sup>.”

So intimate is the connexion between the type and the antitype, that often, in the language of prophecy, the description rises in so wonderful a manner, either gradually or all at once, that we lose sight of the sign in the thing signified. Thus, the evangelical prophet, when proclaiming the deliverance of his nation from the yoke of Babylon by means of Cyrus, and the confusion of idolaters, suddenly expresses himself as if he had been all along speaking of the great salvation : “I have raised him up in righteousness, and I  
“will

“ will direct all his ways: he shall build my  
 “ city, and he shall let go my captives.—They  
 “ shall be ashamed, and be also confounded all  
 “ of them: they shall go to confusion together  
 “ that are makers of idols. But Israel shall be  
 “ saved *in the Lord* with an *everlasting* salvation:  
 “ ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world  
 “ without end <sup>a</sup>.” This prophecy concerning the  
 salvation of Israel could with no propriety be  
 understood of the deliverance from Babylon. It  
 can only respect that salvation of which Christ is  
 the author; that salvation, of which it is an es-  
 sential and unalienable character, that it is *eter-*  
*nal* <sup>b</sup>. Here the type brightens into the anti-  
 type; the shadow disappears, and the substance  
 breaks forth into view.

v. The *union* of Israel unto God, as a peculiar  
 people, was another ground of security. The  
 Lord avouched them to be his peculiar people <sup>c</sup>.  
 They were “ a people near unto him <sup>d</sup>.” He  
 confirmed to himself his people Israel, to be a  
 people unto him for ever <sup>e</sup>. They were joined  
 to him by an everlasting espousals, so that he be-  
 came the husband of the Church <sup>f</sup>; whence all  
 her apostacy from him is represented under the  
 notion of adultery. She bore the name of her  
 divine husband, as a wife does among men, be-  
 cause legally viewed as one with him: “ The  
 “ LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto  
 “ himself.

<sup>a</sup> Isa. xlv. 13, 16, 17. <sup>b</sup> Heb. v. 9. <sup>c</sup> Deut. xxvi. 18. <sup>d</sup> Psa. cxlviii. 14.

<sup>e</sup> 2 Sam. vii. 24.

<sup>f</sup> Isa. liv. 5.; Hos. ii. 19, 20.

“himself.—And all people of the earth shall see  
 “that thou art called by the name of the LORD.”  
 They enjoyed all the benefit of this union in relation to the Messiah. It was “because of the  
 “*anointing*” already mentioned. Therefore Christ and his ancient Church are often spoken of as one. There is a mutual interchange of names between them. The glorious Head, and the members of the Church, are often exhibited, as if they constituted only one person. His name is transferred to them. They are the *Christs*, the anointed of God <sup>i</sup>. Elsewhere he condescends to adopt their name. The characters, which in one place are appropriated to the Church, are in another applied to her Lord. “Thou Israel art *my servant*,  
 “Jacob whom I have *chosen*, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou art my servant, I have  
 “chosen thee, and not cast thee away.”—“Be-  
 “hold, my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in  
 “whom my soul delighteth.” They were made partakers of this distinguishing privilege, and of all the benefits flowing from it, only in consequence of the sovereign choice of JEHOVAH <sup>m</sup>. Therefore, he would not annul all that he had done for them in his sovereign mercy: as he declared by the prophet Samuel; “For the LORD  
 “will not forsake his people, for his great name’s  
 “sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make  
 “you his people.” Even Balaam was assured  
 of

h Deut. xxviii. 9, 10.

i Psal. cv. 15.

k Isa. xli 8. 9.

l Isa. xli. 1.; Mat. xii. 18.

m Deut. vii. 6.

n 1 Sam. xii. 22.

of this : “ He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse  
“ it o.”

Can it be denied, that we have here a lively figure of that grace of union which is conferred on all the spiritual Israel, and of the blessed security connected with it? They are “ a peculiar  
“ people p.” They are “ made nigh by the blood  
“ of Christ q,” united to the Father as their God and Father in him. They are married to Jesus as their husband, betrothed unto him for ever r. In as far as Christians depart from their holy profession, they have the same character given to them, which we find so often applied to God’s ancient people. They are “ adulterers and adulteresses s.” In common with their Lord, all true believers bear the honourable name of Christ t. They are viewed as one in law with him ; as dead and risen with him ; as partakers of the same complete justification, of which his resurrection was the evidence ; as “ made the righteousness of God in him.” By virtue of this union, they are eternally freed from condemnation. For “ there is no condemnation to them  
“ who are in Christ Jesus.” God hath blessed, and who can *reverse* it? “ It is God that justifieth, and who is he that condemneth?” All this blessedness flows from their election. They are “ blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, according as God  
“ hath

p Numb. xxiii. 20.

q 1 Pet. ii. 9.

r Eph. ii. 13.

s Eph. v. 32.; Hos. ii. 19.

t 1 John iv. 4.

t 1 Cor. xii. 12.

“hath chosen them in him before the foundation  
“of the world u.”

vi. God would not altogether destroy his ancient people, because there was still a precious *seed* preserved among them. In the worst times the Lord retained a tithe for himself. Hence, even with respect to a time when there should “be a great forsaking in the midst of the land,” it is promised; “Yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree; and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the *holy seed* shall be the substance thereof v.—Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants sake, that I may not destroy them all w.”

In like manner, the child of God cannot “work sin;” he cannot again fall under its dominion, and be subjected to the curse; “for his seed remaineth in him x.” He is “born of the incorruptible seed of the word y.” He therefore cannot sin “unto death z.” This is an essential character of the seed of the word, that it preserves from the total corruption in which the unrenewed lie, and from that final apostacy into which they fall.

vii. It was one of the distinguishing privileges of the Israelites, that God gave them his *Spirit*.

Besides

u Eph. i. 3.

v Isa. vi. 13.

w Isa. lxv. 8.

x 1 John iii. 9.

y 1 Pet. i. 23.

z 1 John v. 16, 18.



Besides the gracious operations of the Spirit, which were confined to the elect among them, his influences were communicated, for the benefit of Israel in general, in a variety of ways. He was given as a Spirit of inspiration to the penmen of Scripture, for the instruction of the Church, as Nehemiah acknowledges: "Thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them<sup>a</sup>." He was communicated as a Spirit of prophecy, and also of miraculous operation. By him were men supplied with an extraordinary degree of bodily strength, with wisdom for government, with fortitude for war, with eminent qualifications for works of art<sup>b</sup>. They "rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit." Yet he still continued among them: and this is pointed out as a special ground of consolation under trial, and as an antidote against fear. When the Jews were disheartened, because the glory of their second temple was so far inferior to that of the first, the following message was delivered by the prophet Haggai; "I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts: according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not<sup>c</sup>." They enjoyed the presence of God in this respect, as a pledge of preservation from total destruction: "*I am with thee*, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee<sup>d</sup>."

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E c

This

<sup>a</sup> Neh. ix. 20.<sup>b</sup> See Owen on the Spirit, E. ii. chap. 1.<sup>c</sup> Hag. ii. 4, 5.<sup>d</sup> Jer. xxx. 11.

This was undoubtedly a blessed emblem of the safety of all believers, as “built up for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” He is conferred on them in all his gifts and graces, according to the state of the Church, or their peculiar calls. He acts in them all, as “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.” He supplies them with fortitude in their spiritual warfare; and by him they are “strengthened with all might in the inner man.” Some, like Bezaleel and Aholiab of old, are furnished with peculiar gifts for labouring in the work of the sanctuary<sup>e</sup>. Often do his people provoke their gracious God. But he deals with them, as he did with David. He casts them not away from his presence; nor takes his Holy Spirit from them. On the contrary, he brings them to evangelical repentance, thus restores to them the joy of his salvation, and upholds them with his *free* Spirit<sup>f</sup>; with the influences of that Spirit, who is no less sovereign in all his operations on the renewed soul, than he was in the work of regeneration itself. The very design of the mission of this gracious Comforter, is that he may abide with them for ever<sup>g</sup>; and “seal” them, as the LORD’s peculiar treasure, “unto the day of redemption<sup>h</sup>.”

VII. God often saved Israel, in the day of their provocation, or of their danger, at the *intercession* of

<sup>e</sup> Exod. xxxi. 1.—5.

<sup>f</sup> Psal. li. 12, 12.

<sup>g</sup> John xiv. 16.

<sup>h</sup> Eph. i. 13, 14.; v. 30..

of his servants. Thus Moses interceded for the people, when God threatened to destroy them because of their idolatry ; and afterwards, when they murmured at the report of the spies : and in both instances his intercession was successful <sup>i</sup>. When they rebelled because of the display of divine vengeance against Korah and his associates, and the plague brake forth among them, Aaron ran into the midst of the congregation, with his flaming censer in his hand, and made atonement. He “ stood between the living and the dead, and “ the plague was stayed <sup>k</sup>.” David, in like manner, after he had himself provoked the LORD by numbering the people, made intercession, as he also offered sacrifices. “ So the LORD was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed “ from Israel <sup>l</sup>.”

Many other instances might be given of the success of intercession in the experience of Israel. But it is evident, that these three persons, in all the instances mentioned, acted expressly as types of Christ ; and as prefiguring both the truth, and the success, of his intercession. Moses acted as a Mediator between God and his people ; Aaron as “ the saint, the holy One, of God ;” David as his Anointed. There was something highly emblematical in the very circumstances of their intercession. Moses proposed to make an atonement for the sin of Israel. He, as has been seen in a former section, expressed his resolution to devote

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himself

<sup>i</sup> Exod. xxxii. 10. 30.—32.; Numb. xiv. 11.—20.

<sup>k</sup> Numb. xvi. 47, 48.

<sup>l</sup> 2 Sam. xxiv. 17, 25.

himself for them. "If thou wilt," he says, "forgive their sin: and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." The Man of God seems determined either to perish with, or for, his beloved Israel; unwilling to enjoy any mercy that he might not hold in common with them. Aaron rushed in between the vengeance of the Almighty and offending Israel. He substituted himself as a mark for the arrows of divine wrath. David did the same. When he saw the angel that smote the people, he said unto the LORD; "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me." In all this, do we not see the character, and the conduct, of the good Shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep, who intercedes for them on the ground of the atonement he hath made? "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins." Satan would have us, that he might sift us as wheat: and when he sifts, he wishes to retain nothing but the chaff in his sieve. But Jesus prays for us, that our faith fail not. "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son: much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life," as our interceding High-priest. Did the LORD say to Moses, "I have pardoned according to thy word?" And may we not be assured, that the Father grants to

to the true Mediator “all his heart’s desire ;” and particularly when he asks in behalf of his people “life of him, even length of days for ever and “ever?” Did he accept of the typical sacrifices, and of the smoke of incense, as making atonement? Were these of any worth in his sight? No, surely ; but in as far as they prefigured the perfect atonement and ever-prevalent intercession of our glorious Surety.

ix. The ancient people of God were preserved from destruction, by a constant exercise of almighty *power*, by the hand of that *Angel* whom he promised as their leader. This glorious Angel, as has been formerly observed, was no other than our Lord Jesus Christ, acting as “the Messenger of the covenant ;” and, according to the character of that dispensation, figuratively manifesting the nature of his office with respect to all who are Israelites indeed. Concerning him the Father declared ; “Behold, I send an Angel “before thee, to *keep thee in the way*, and to “bring thee into the *place* which I have *prepared*.” It was this Angel of God’s presence, who “saved them,—bare them, and carried them “all the days of old,” He exercised unremitting watchfulness over them. Hence it is said ; “He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.—“Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither “slumber nor sleep.” His tender care of his people is represented under the most expressive

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metaphors



metaphors. He appeared as the “ Shepherd of Israel, who led Joseph as a flock <sup>t</sup>.” He had promised to Abraham that to his seed he would give “ all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession <sup>u</sup>.”—He accordingly “ led them on safely, so that they feared not ;—and he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain which his right hand had purchased .” “ He led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, taketh them, beareth them on her wings ; so the LORD alone did lead him <sup>w</sup>.” It was the privilege of the literal Israel, as being externally “ an *holy* people,” to be preserved by Christ ; as Moses sings : “ Yea, he loved the people ; all his saints are in thy hand <sup>x</sup>.” As really as his mercy was conspicuous in their redemption, his power was displayed in their continued preservation : “ Thou in thy *mercy* hast led forth the people whom thou hast redeemed : thou hast guided them in thy *strength* unto thy holy habitation <sup>y</sup>.”

Often, as the punishment of their iniquities, he suffered them to be for a time led captive by their heathen foes, whom he “ left to prove Israel.” But when they cried unto him, he still delivered them <sup>z</sup>. The lamp that God lighted up among them, often became, through their own wickedness, like “ a smoking flax.” But he would

<sup>t</sup> Psal lxxx. i.

<sup>u</sup> Gen. xvii. 8.

<sup>v</sup> Psal lxxviii. 53. 54.

<sup>w</sup> Deut. xxxii. 10.—12.

<sup>x</sup> Deut. xxxiii. 3.

<sup>y</sup> Exod. xv. 13.

<sup>z</sup> Judg. iii. 1. 9. 15. vi. 6. 14. &c.

would not suffer it at any time to be totally extinguished, because it was ordained for his anointed. Their preservation, indeed, seems to be solely the effect of one continued miracle. Nothing but the wonderful operation of divine power could have preserved them in Egypt, when the whole nation conspired for their destruction. During forty years were they miraculously supported in the wilderness. The heavens gave them bread, and the flinty rock supplied them with water. Had their nourishing dew been withheld, or the rock been dried up, for a few days ; the whole people must have perished. Although supported by ordinary means, after they were brought to Canaan, their deliverances were often entirely miraculous ; and their continued preservation, in the midst of so many powerful nations, that still sought to destroy them, can scarcely be viewed in any other light.

Now, as we are certain that this tender care was no ways merited by Israel, it is no less evident that all the glory that redounded to God, from the displays of his mercy and power, in their outward deliverance, cannot reasonably be viewed as an object in itself sufficiently worthy of the means employed. If we do not view their wonderful preservation as strictly typical of the preservation of a people formed by God for himself, in a far superior way to shew forth his praise ; we must be for ever at a loss to perceive infinite wisdom in this series of miracles. It would seem to be but a waste of mercy and of power, if they

were never meant to subserve some higher end. But for our sakes especially were these things done, and for our sakes were they written, that we might know that our help cometh only from the Lord.

The very language, which is used in the Old Testament with respect to the preservation of this peculiar people, is in the New, appropriated to them who believe. The same Angel of the covenant stablishes his saints, and *keeps* them from evil<sup>a</sup>. He could testify to his Father, that, while he was in the world, he had kept them in his name<sup>b</sup>. While about to leave it, he said to them; “I go to *prepare a place* for you. And—“I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also<sup>c</sup>.” As “the good Shepherd, he calleth his own sheep “by name, and leadeth them out: and when he “putteth forth his own sheep, he *goeth before* “them.” Concerning them he graciously saith; “I give unto them eternal life, and they shall “never perish, neither shall any pluck them out “of *my hand*<sup>d</sup>.” When they are begotten again, it is “to a lively hope,—to an inheritance” far surpassing that which was its figure, “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them, “who are kept by the power of God, through “faith unto salvation<sup>e</sup>.” That gift of the Spirit, of which we have already spoken, is evidently described

<sup>a</sup> 2 Thes. iii. 3.

<sup>b</sup> John xvii. 12.

<sup>c</sup> John xiv. 2. 3.

<sup>d</sup> John x. 3. 4. 28.

<sup>e</sup> 1 Pet. i. 3.—5.

described in language borrowed from the typical mercies of Israel. It is "the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession<sup>f</sup>." All who are "sanctified by God the Father," are "preserved in Christ Jesus<sup>g</sup>." He does not entirely deliver them from their spiritual enemies. He "slays them not, lest his people should forget<sup>h</sup>." Paul, as a renewed person, thus declares his experience; "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." Hence his people complain of wretchedness. But by faith they are assured of deliverance through Jesus Christ their Lord<sup>i</sup>. Grace in their souls is often as "a smoking flax." But so gracious is their almighty Redeemer, that the "smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory<sup>k</sup>."

If a miracle be something entirely beyond the power of nature, what is the preservation of the children of God but a continued miracle. As they were at first "born from above," the whole of those supplies that are necessary for the support of this life come from the same quarter. They feed on "the hidden manna." They drink of "the pure river of the water of life." They continue in a wilderness, where there is neither bread nor water for their souls. They are encompassed with pits, and snares, and beasts of prey; constantly fighting with enemies, and especially

<sup>f</sup> Eph. i. 14.    <sup>g</sup> Jude i.    <sup>h</sup> Psal. liz. 11.    <sup>i</sup> Rom. vii. 23—25.  
<sup>k</sup> Matth. xii. 20.

pecially with a body of sin in their own hearts. The power that preserves them from perishing, in such circumstances, is entirely supernatural.

The doctrine of divine conservation affords encouragement to the children of God, when labouring under a sense of guilt that threatens to overwhelm them, or when they may be apt to conclude that sin is about to regain its empire in their hearts. Those who never felt the arrows of the Almighty, or who still continue strangers to the dreadful power of sin in the soul, may depreciate this doctrine as at best unprofitable. But it cannot be viewed in this light by any who know what is meant by “a wounded spirit, or who have been “tossed with tempest.” In such a situation, a believing view of the eternity and immutability of divine love, of its sovereignty as overlooking our continued unworthiness, can alone give relief. Hither also must we turn our eye for comfort, when sin rages and threatens to destroy. This is the consolation that God himself exhibits: “Sin shall not have dominion over “you; for ye are—under grace.—He that hath “begun a good work, will perform it unto the “day of Jesus Christ.”

We may also learn, that although the believer is secured in a state of grace, no room is left for the indulgence of carnal security, no encouragement is given to continue in sin. Many decry this doctrine, as if it were adverse to the interests of holiness. The contrary is clear from the history of God’s ancient people. Even while he  
proclaimed



proclaimed the eternity of his love, he denounced the severest judgments as the punishment of apostacy; and when they actually departed from him, he fulfilled his threatenings. “He delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemies hand.” God would not break his covenant with David, notwithstanding his great trespass in the matter of Uriah. But did the divine conduct afford any encouragement to him, or to any believer, to sin? Was not David informed, that therefore the sword should never depart from his house: and was not this threatening awfully verified in succeeding generations?

In a similar manner does he deal with the people of his love, when they provoke him by their iniquities. He withdraws from them the light of his countenance, suffers them to be led into captivity for a time by the power of their lusts, and to lose the persuasion of his covenant-love. They are tried, it may be, ever after with darkness as to their eternal state. The Almighty, perhaps, gives a command to his terrors to “set themselves in array” against them. Or, they are buffeted by Satan, by means of the most horrid temptations. Or, he chastens them outwardly by severe bodily afflictions, by great temporal calamities, affecting their substance or reputation; by removing their dearest earthly comforts, “the desire of their eyes.” Can these things be viewed as no check to sin? Is the soul of a Christian cast in such a mould, that nothing  
‘ but

but the fear of eternal perdition can prevail with him?

Notwithstanding the declarations of the perpetuity of God's love to his ancient people, they had no encouragement to expect the renewed evidences of this love, unless they returned to him from whom they had revolted<sup>k</sup>. Such is his conduct towards his spiritual Israel. The LORD still says; "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their iniquity." According to the divine testimony, they have no reason to expect deliverance from judgments, or the renewed manifestations of his love, without turning from their evil ways.

We may add to these considerations, that when there appeared any thing like true repentance among God's ancient people, it always especially proceeded from a sense of his love. The great argument, which he employed to enforce, not merely the first precept, but the whole law, is founded on the principle of gratitude; and the very same which he still renders effectual with his children: "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not bow down," &c. The severest judgments with which they were visited, never brought them back to a sense of duty. When a sincere or general reformation took place, they were principally

<sup>k</sup> Deut. xxx. 1.—3.; 1 Kings viii. 31.—54.

principally affected by a discovery of federal love<sup>1</sup>. This is a proof, among many others, that the doctrine we have illustrated, instead of being an encouragement to sin, can alone prove a proper incitement to duty. It is thus in the experience of the children of God. When they feel the rod only, they are “as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.” But the love of Christ, when shed abroad in their hearts, especially when manifested in its glorious sovereignty and immutability, *constraineth* them.

This doctrine, in a word, supplies us with consolation under the greatest adversities. The LORD often severely afflicted that nation, or that family, which he had chosen. But he did it in love. This was designed for our instruction. How severely soever we may be afflicted, let us not for this reason call in question the love of God. Still he saith to us; “I will never, never leave thee.—My love will I not take from him. “When thou passest through the waters, I will “be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall “not overflow thee: when thou walkest through “the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall “the flames kindle on thee. For I am the LORD “*thy God*, the holy One of Israel, *thy Saviour*.” We may be fully assured, that even our afflictions, instead of tending to our destruction, are meant in subserviency to our salvation; that they

“work

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. xx. 6.—9.; xxx. 6. 9.; Ezra ix. 8, 9. 13. 15.; Neh. ix. 7.  
—31.; Lam. ix. 4. 9. 15. 18.

“ work together for good ;”—that “ when we are  
“ judged, we are chastened of the LORD, that we  
“ should not be condemned with the world ;”  
that he chastens us “ for our profit, that we may  
“ be partakers of his holiness ;” and that he will  
at length put this song in our mouths, “ We went  
“ through fire and through water ; but thou  
“ broughtest us out into a wealthy place.”

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